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the first years of his absence; and although the Duke's answers were short, seldom, and not very satisfactory, Mr. Dacre persisted in occasionally addressing him. When, however, the Duke had arrived at an age when he was at least morally responsible for his own conduct, and entirely neglected answering his guardian's letters, Mr. Dacre became altogether silent.

The travelling career of the young Duke may be conceived by those who have wasted their time, and are compensated for that silliness by being called Men of the World. He gamed a little at Paris; he ate a good deal at Vienna; and he studied the fine arts in Italy. In all places, his homage to the fair sex was renowned. The Parisian duchess, the Austrian princess, and the Italian countess, spoke in the most enthusiastic terms of the English nobility. At the end of three years, the Duke of St. James was of opinion, that he had obtained a great knowledge of mankind. He was mistaken:—travel is not, as is imagined, the best school for that sort of science. Knowledge of mankind is a knowledge of their passions. The traveller is looked upon as a bird of passage, whose visit is short, and which the vanity of the visited wishes to make agreeable. All is show, all false, and all made up. Coterie succeeds coterie, equally smiling—the explosions take place in his absence. Even a grand passion, which teaches a man more, perhaps, than anything else, is not very easily excited by the traveller. The women know that, sooner or later, he must disappear; and though this is the case with all lovers, they do not like to miss the possibility of delusion. Thus the heroines keep in the back-ground, and the visitor, who is always in a hurry, falls into the net of the first flirtation that offers.

The Duke of St. James had, however, acquired a great knowledge—if not of mankind, at any rate of manners. He had visited all Courts, and sparkled in the most brilliant circles of the Continent. He returned to his own country with a taste extremely refined, a manner most polished, and a person highly accomplished.

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CHAPTER III.

A SORT of scrambling correspondence had been kept up between the young Duke and his cousin, Lord St. Maurice, who had for a few months been his fellow-traveller. By virtue of these epistles, notice of the movements of their interesting relative occasionally reached the circle at Fitz-pompey House, although St. Maurice was very scanty in the much-desired communications; because, like most young Englishmen, he derived singular pleasure from depriving his fellow-creatures of all that small information which every one is so desirous to obtain. The announcement, however, of the approaching arrival of the young Duke was duly made. Lord Fitz-pompey wrote, and offered apartments at Fitz-pompey House. They were refused. Lord Fitz-pompey wrote again, to require instructions for the preparation of Hauteville House. His letter was unanswered. Lord Fitz-pompey was quite puzzled.

"When does your cousin mean to come, Charles?—Where does your cousin mean to go, Charles?—What does your cousin mean to do, Charles?" These were the hourly queries of the noble uncle.

At length, in the middle of January, when no one expected him, the Duke of St. James arrived at Mivart's. He was attended by a French cook, an Italian valet, a German jager, and a Greek page. At this dreary season of the year, this party was, perhaps, the most distinguished in the metropolis.

Three years' absence, and a little knowledge of life, had somewhat changed the Duke of St. James' feelings with regard to his noble relative. He was quite disembarrassed of that Panglossian philosophy which had hitherto induced him to believe that the Earl of Fitz-pompey was the best of all possible uncles. On the contrary, his Grace rather doubted whether the course which his relations had pursued towards him was quite the most proper and the most prudent; and he took great credit to himself for having, with such unbounded indulgence, on the whole, deported himself with so remarkable a temperance. His Grace, too, could no longer innocently delude himself with the idea, that all the attention which had been lavished upon him was solely occasioned by the impulse of consanguinity. Finally, the young Duke's conscience often misgave him, when he thought of Mr. Dacre. He determined therefore, on returning to England, not to commit himself too decidedly with the Fitz-pompeys; and he had cautiously guarded himself from being entrapped into becoming their guest. At the same time, the recollection of old intimacy, the general regard which he really felt for them all, and the sincere affection

which he entertained for his cousin Caroline, would have deterred him from giving any outward signs of his altered feelings, even if other considerations had not intervened.

And other considerations did intervene. A Duke, and a young Duke, is a very important personage; but he must still be introduced. Even our hero might make a bad tack on his first cruize. Almost as important personages have committed the same blunder. Talk of Catholic emancipation! O, thou Imperial Parliament! emancipate the forlorn wretches who have got into a bad set! Even thy omnipotence must fail there!

Now the Countess of Fitz-pompey was a brilliant of the first water. Under no better auspices could the Duke of St. James bound upon the stage. No man in town could arrange his club affairs for him with greater celerity and greater tact than the Earl: and the married daughters were as much like their mother as a pair of diamond ear-rings are like a diamond necklace.

The Duke, therefore, though he did not choose to get caged in Fitz-pompey House, sent his page, Spiridion, to the Countess, on a special embassy of announcement on the evening of his arrival; and on the following morning, his Grace himself made his appearance at an early hour.

Lord Fitz-pompey, who was as consummate a judge of men and manners as he was an indifferent speculator on affairs, and who was almost as finished a man of the world as he was an imperfect philosopher, soon perceived that considerable changes had taken place in the ideas as well as in the exterior of his nephew. The Duke, however, was extremely cordial, and greeted the family in terms almost of fondness. He shook his uncle by the hand with a fervour with which few noblemen had communicated for a considerable period; and he saluted his aunt on the cheek with a delicacy which did not disturb the rouge. He turned to his cousin.

Lady Caroline St. Maurice was indeed a right beautiful being. Her, whom the young Duke had left merely a graceful and kind-hearted girl, three years had changed into a somewhat dignified, but most lovely woman. A little perhaps of her native ease had been lost, a little perhaps of a manner rather too artificial had supplanted that exquisite address which Nature alone had prompted: but at this moment, her manner was as unstudied and as genuine as when they had gambolled together in the bowers of Malthorpe. Her white and delicate arm was extended with cordial grace; her full blue eye beamed with fondness; and the soft blush that rose on her fair cheek exquisitely contrasted with the clusters of her dark brown hair.

The Duke was struck, almost staggered. He remembered their

infant loves; he recovered with ready address. He bent his head with graceful affection, and pressed her lips. He almost repented that he had not accepted his uncle's offer of hospitality.

CHAPTER IV.

Lord Fitz-pompey was a little consoled for the change which he had observed in the character of the Duke, by the remembrance of the embrace with which his Grace had greeted Lady Caroline. Never indeed did a process which has, through the lapse of so many ages, occasioned so much delight, produce more lively satisfaction than the kiss in question. Lord Fitz-pompey had given up his plan of managing the Duke, after the family dinner which his nephew had the pleasure to join the first day of his first visit. The Duke and he were alone, and his Lordship availed himself of the rare opportunity with that adroitness for which he was celebrated. Nothing could be more polite, more affable, more kind, than his Grace's manner; but the uncle cared little for politeness, or affability, or kindness. The crafty courtier wanted candour, and that was absent. That ingenuous openness of disposition, that frank and affectionate demeanour, for which the Duke of St. James had been so remarkable in his early youth, and with the aid of which Lord Fitz-pompey had built so many Spanish castles, had quite disappeared. Nothing could be more artificial, more conventional, more studied, than his whole deportment. In vain, Lord Fitz-pompey pumped; the empty bucket invariably reminded him of his lost labour. In vain, his Lordship laid his little diplomatic traps to catch a hint of the purposes or an intimation of the inclinations of his nephew; the bait was never seized. In vain, the Earl affected unusual conviviality and boundless affection; the Duke sipped his claret, and admired his pictures. Nothing would do. An air of habitual calm, a look of kind condescension, and an inclination to a smile, which never burst into a beam, announced that the Duke of St. James was perfectly satisfied with existence, and conscious that he was himself, of that existence, the most distinguished ornament. In fact, he was a sublime coxcomb, one of those rare characters whose finished manner and shrewd sense combined, prevent their conceit from being contemptible. After many consultations, it was determined between the aunt and uncle that it would be most prudent to affect a total non-interference with their nephew's affairs, and,

in the meantime, to trust to the goodness of Providence, and the charms of Caroline.

Lady Fitz-pompey determined that the young Duke should make his début at once, and at her house. Although it was yet January, she did not despair of collecting a select band of guests —Brahmins of the highest caste. Some choice spirits were in office, like her lord, and therefore in town; others were only passing through; but no one caught a flying-fish with more dexterity than the Countess. The notice was short, the whole was unstudied. It was a felicitous impromptu; and twenty guests were assembled, who were the Corinthian capitals of the Temple of Fashion.

There was the Premier, who was invited, not because he was a Minister, but because he was a Hero. There was another Duke not less celebrated, whose palace was a breathing shrine which sent forth the oracles of mode. True, he had ceased to be a young Duke, but he might be consoled for the vanished lustre of youth, by the recollection that he had enjoyed it, and by the present inspiration of an accomplished manhood. There were the Prince and the Princess Protocoli. His Highness, a first-rate diplomatist, unrivalled for his management of an opera; and his consort, with a countenance like Cleopatra, and a tiara like a constellation, famed alike for her shawls and her snuff. There were Lord and Lady Bloomerly, who were the best friends on earth. My Lord, a sportsman, but soft withal; his talk, the Jockey Club, filtered through White's. My Lady, a little blue, and very beautiful. Their daughter, Lady Charlotte, rose by her mother's side, like a tall bud by a full-blown flower. There was the Viscountess Blaze, a peeress in her own right, and her daughter, Miss Blaze Dashaway, who, besides the glory of the future coronet, moved in all the confidence of independent thousands. There was the Marquess of Macaroni, who was at the same time a general, an ambassador, and a dandy; and who, if he had liked, could have worn twelve orders; but this day, being modest, only wore six. There, too, was the Marchioness, with a stomacher stiff with brilliants, extracted from the snuff-boxes presented to her husband at a Congress.

There was Lord Sunium, who was not only a peer, but a poet; and his lady, a Greek, who looked just finished by Phidias. There, too, was Pococurante, the Epicurean and triple Millionaire, who, in a political country, dared to despise politics; in the most aristocratic of kingdoms, had refused nobility; and in a land which showers all its honours upon its cultivators, invested his whole fortune in the funds. He lived in a retreat like the villa of Hadrian, and maintained himself in an elevated position, chiefly by his wit, and, a little, by his wealth. There, too, was his noble wife, thorough bred to her fingers' tips, and beaming like the evening

star; and his son, who was an M.P., and thought his father a fool. In short, our party was no common party, but a band who formed the very core of civilisation,—a high court of last appeal, whose word was a fiat, whose sign was a hint, whose stare was death, and sneer——damnation!

The Graces befriend us! We have forgotten the most important personage. It is the first time in his life that Charles Annesley has been neglected. It will do him good.

Dandy has been voted vulgar, and beau is now the word. It may be doubted whether the revival will stand; and as for the exploded title, though it had its faults at first, the muse of Byron has made it, not only English, but classical. Charles Annesley could hardly be called a dandy, or a beau. There was nothing in his dress—though some mysterious arrangement in his costume, some rare simplicity, some curious happiness, always made it distinguished—there was nothing, however, in his dress, which could account for the influence which he exercised over the manners of his contemporaries. Charles Annesley was about thirty. He had inherited from his father, a younger brother, a small estate; and though heir to a wealthy earldom, he had never abused what the world called "his prospects." Yet his establishment—his little house in May Fair—his horses—his moderate stud at Melton—were all unique, and everything connected with him was unparalleled for its elegance, its invention, and its refinement. But his manner was his magic. His natural and subdued nonchalance, so different from the assumed non-emotion of a mere dandy; his coldness of heart, which was hereditary, not acquired; his cautious courage, and his unadulterated self-love; had permitted him to mingle much with mankind without being too deeply involved in the play of their passions; while his exquisite sense of the ridiculous quickly revealed those weaknesses to him, which his delicate satire did not spare, even while it refrained from wounding. All feared, many admired, and none hated him. He was too powerful not to dread, too dexterous not to admire, too superior to hate. Perhaps the great secret of his manner was his exquisite superciliousness, a quality which, of all, is the most difficult to manage. Even with his intimates he was never confidential, and perpetually assumed his public character with the private coterie which he loved to rule. On the whole, he was unlike any of the leading men of modern days, and rather reminded one of the fine gentlemen of our old brilliant comedy,—the Dorimants, the Bellairs, and the Mirabels.

Charles Annesley was a member of the distinguished party who were this day to decide the fate of the young Duke. Let him come forward!

His Grace moved towards them tall and elegant in figure, and with that air of affable dignity which becomes a noble, and which adorns a court—none of that affected indifference which seems to imply that nothing can compensate for the exertion of moving, and "which makes the dandy, while it mars the man." His large and somewhat sleepy grey eye, his clear complexion, his small mouth, his aquiline nose, his transparent forehead, his rich brown hair, and the delicacy of his extremities, presented, when combined, a very excellent specimen of that style of beauty for which the nobility of England are remarkable. Gentle,—for he felt the importance of the tribunal—never loud, ready, yet a little reserved, he neither courted nor shunned examination. His finished manner, his experience of society, his pretensions to taste, the gaiety of his temper, and the liveliness of his imagination, gradually developed themselves with the developing hours.

The banquet was over: the Duke of St. James passed his examination with unqualified approval; and having been stamped at the Mint of Fashion, as a sovereign of the brightest die, he was flung forth, like the rest of his golden brethren, to corrupt the society of which he was the brightest ornament

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CHAPTER V.

THE morning after the initiatory dinner, the young Duke drove to Hauteville House, his family mansion, situated in his family square. His Grace particularly prided himself on his knowledge of the arts; a taste for which, among other things, he intended to introduce into England. Nothing could exceed the horror with which he witnessed the exterior of his mansion, except the agony with which he paced through the interior.

"Is this a palace?" thought the young Duke—"this hospital a palace!"

He entered. The marble hall—the broad and lofty double staircase painted in fresco, were not unpromising, in spite of the dingy gilding; but with what a mixed feeling of wonder and disgust did the Duke roam through clusters of those queer chambers which, in England, are called drawing-rooms!

"Where are the galleries,—where the symmetrical saloons,—where the lengthened suite,—where the collateral cabinets, sacred to the statue of a nymph or the mistress of a painter, in which I have been accustomed to reside? What page would condescend to lounge in this ante-chamber? And is this gloomy vault, that

you call a dining-room, to be my hall of Apollo?—Order my carriage."

The Duke sent immediately for Sir Carte Blanche, the successor, in England, of Sir Christopher Wren. His Grace communicated, at the same time, his misery and his grand views. Sir Carte was astonished with his Grace's knowledge, and sympathised with his Grace's feelings. He offered consolation, and promised estimates. They came in due time. Hauteville House, in the drawing of the worthy Knight, might have been mistaken for the Louvre. Some adjoining mansions were, by some magical process for which Sir Carte was famous, to be cleared of their present occupiers, and the whole side of the square was, in future, to be the site of Hauteville House. The difficulty was great, but the object was greater. The expense, though the estimate made a bold assault on the half million, was a mere trifle, "*considering.*" The Duke was delighted. He condescended to make a slight alteration in Sir Carte's drawing, which Sir Carte affirmed to be a great improvement. Now it was Sir Carte's turn to be delighted. The Duke was excited by his architect's admiration, and gave him a dissertation on Schonnbrunn.

Although Mr. Dacre had been disappointed in his hope of exercising a personal influence over the education of his ward, he had been more fortunate in his plans for the management of his ward's property. Perhaps there never was an instance of the opportunities afforded by a long minority having been used to greater advantage. The estates had been increased and greatly improved; all and very heavy mortgages had been paid off, and the rents been fairly apportioned. Mr. Dacre, by his constant exertions and able dispositions, since his return to England, also made up for the neglect with which an important point had been a little treated; and at no period had the parliamentary influence of the house of Hauteville been so extensive, so decided, and so well bottomed, as when our hero became its chief.

In spite of his proverbial pride, it seemed that Mr. Dacre was determined not to be offended by the conduct of his ward. The Duke had not yet announced his arrival in England to his guardian; but about a month after that event, he received a letter of congratulation from Mr. Dacre, who, at the same time, expressed a desire to resign a trust into his Grace's hand, which, he believed, had not been abused. The Duke, who rather dreaded an interview, wrote in return, that he intended very shortly to visit Yorkshire, when he should have the pleasure of availing himself of the kind invitation to Castle Dacre; and having thus, as he thought, dexterously got rid of the old gentleman for the present, he took a ride with Lady Caroline St. Maurice.

CHAPTER VI.

PARLIAMENT assembled, the town filled, and every moment in the day of the Duke of St. James was occupied. Sir Carte and his tribe filled up the morning. Then there were endless visits to endless visitors; dressing; riding, chiefly with Lady Caroline; luncheons, and the bow window at White's. Then came the evening with all its crash and glare; the banquet, the opera, and the ball.

The Duke of St. James took the oaths and his seat. He was introduced by Lord Fitz-pompey. He heard a debate. We laugh at such a thing, especially in the Upper House; but, on the whole, the affair is imposing, particularly if we take a part in it. Lord Ex-Chamberlain thought the nation going on wrong; and he made a speech full of currency and constitution. Baron Deprivyseal seconded him with great effect, brief but bitter, satirical and sore. The Earl of Quarterday answered these, full of confidence in the nation and in himself. When the debate was getting heavy, Lord Snap jumped up to give them something light. The Lords do not encourage wit, and so are obliged to put up with pertness. But Viscount Memoir was very statesmanlike, and spouted a sort of universal history. Then there was Lord Ego, who vindicated his character, when nobody knew he had one, and explained his motives, because his auditors could not understand his acts. Then there was a maiden speech, so inaudible, that it was doubted whether, after all, the young orator really did lose his virginity. In the end, up started the Premier, who, having nothing to say, was manly, and candid, and liberal; gave credit to his adversaries, and took credit to himself, and then the motion was withdrawn.

While all this was going on, some made a note, some made a bet; some consulted a book, some their ease; some yawned, a few slept; yet, on the whole, there was an air about the assembly which can be witnessed in no other in Europe. Even the most indifferent looked as if he would come forward, if the occasion should demand him, and the most imbecile, as if he could serve his country, if it required him. When a man raises his eyes from his bench, and sees his ancestor in the tapestry, he begins to understand the pride of blood.

The young Duke had not experienced many weeks of his career, before he began to sicken of living in an hotel. Hitherto he had not reaped any of the fruits of the termination of his minority. He was a *cavalier seul*, highly considered, truly, but yet a mere member of society. He had been this for years. This was

not the existence to enjoy which he had hurried to England. He aspired to be society itself. In a word, his tastes were of the most magnificent description, and he sighed to be surrounded by a court. As Hauteville House, even with Sir Carte's extraordinary exertions, could not be ready for his reception for three years, which to him appeared eternity, he determined to look about for an establishment. He was fortunate. A nobleman, who possessed an hereditary mansion of the first class, and much too magnificent for his resources, suddenly became diplomatic, and accepted an embassy. The Duke of St. James took everything off his hands: house, furniture, wines, cooks, servants, horses. Sir Carte was sent in to touch up the gilding, and make a few temporary improvements; and Lady Fitz-pompey pledged herself to organise the whole establishment, ere the full season commenced, and the early Easter had elapsed, which had now arrived.

It had arrived, and the young Duke had departed to his chief family seat, Hauteville Castle, in Yorkshire. He intended, at the same time, to fulfil his long-pledged engagement at Castle Dacre. He arrived at Hauteville amid the ringing of bells, the roasting of oxen, and the crackling of bonfires. The Castle, unlike most Yorkshire castles, was a Gothic edifice, ancient, vast, and strong; but it had received numerous additions in various styles of architecture, which were at the same time great sources of convenience, and great violations of taste. The young Duke was seized with a violent desire to live in a genuine Gothic castle: each day his refined taste was outraged by discovering Roman windows and Grecian doors. He determined to emulate Windsor, and he sent for Sir Carte.

Sir Carte came as quick as thunder after lightning. He was immensely struck with Hauteville, particularly with its capabilities. It was a superb place, certainly, and might be rendered unrivalled. The situation seemed made for the pure Gothic. The left wing should decidedly be pulled down, and its site occupied by a Knight's hall; the old terrace should be restored; the donjon keep should be raised, and a gallery, three hundred feet long, thrown through the body of the castle. Estimates, estimates, estimates! But the time? This was a greater point than the expense. Wonders should be done. There were now five hundred men working for Hauteville House; there should be a thousand for Hauteville Castle. Carte Blanche, Carte Blanche, Carte Blanche!

On his arrival in Yorkshire, the Duke had learnt that the Dacres were in Norfolk on a visit. As the Castle was some miles off, he saw no necessity to make an useless exertion, and so he sent his jager with his card. He had now been ten days in his native county. It was dull, and he was restless. He missed the excite-

ment of perpetual admiration, and his eye drooped for constant glitter. He suddenly returned to town, just when the county had flattered itself that he was about to appoint his public days.

CHAPTER VII.

EASTER was over, the sun shone, the world was mad, and the young Duke made his début at Almack's. He determined to prove that he had profited by a winter at Vienna. His dancing was declared consummate. He galloped with grace and waltzed with vigour. It was difficult to decide which was more admirable, the elegance of his prance, or the precision of his whirl. A fat Russian Prince, a lean Austrian Count, a little German Baron, who, somehow or other, always contrived to be the most marked characters of the evening, disappeared in despair.

There was a lady in the room who very much attracted the notice of our hero. She was a remarkable personage. There are some sorts of beauty which defy description, and almost scrutiny. Some faces rise upon us in the tumult of life, like stars from out the sea, or as if they had moved out of a picture. Our first impression is anything but fleshly. We are struck dumb—we gasp —our limbs quiver—a faintness glides over our frame—we are awed; instead of gazing upon the apparition, we avert the eyes, which yet will feed upon its beauty. A strange sort of unearthly pain mixes with the intense pleasure. And not till, with a struggle, we call back to our memory the commonplaces of existence, can we recover our commonplace demeanour. These, indeed, are rare visions—early feelings, when our young existence leaps with its mountain torrents; but as the river of our life rolls on, our eyes grow dimmer, or our blood more cold.

Some effect of this kind was produced on the Duke of St. James by the unknown dame. He turned away his head to collect his senses. His eyes again rally; and this time being prepared, he was more successful in his observations.

The lady was standing against the wall; a young man was addressing some remarks to her which apparently were not very interesting. She was tall and young, and, as her tiara betokened, married; dazzling fair, but without colour; with locks like night, and features delicate, but precisely defined. Yet all this did not at first challenge the observation of the young Duke. It was the general and peculiar expression of her countenance, which had caused in him such emotion. There was an expression of resigna-

tion, or repose, or sorrow, or serenity, which in these excited chambers was strange, and singular, and lone. She gazed like some genius invisible to the crowd, and mourning over its degradation.

He stopped St. Maurice, as his cousin passed by, to inquire her name, and learnt that she was Lady Aphrodite Grafton, the wife of Sir Lucius Grafton.

"What, Lucy Grafton!" exclaimed the Duke. "I remember, I was his fag at Eton. He was a handsome dog,—but I doubt whether he deserves such a wife. Introduce me."

Lady Aphrodite received our hero with a gentle bow, and did not seem quite as impressed with his importance as most of those to whom he had been presented in the course of the evening. The Duke had considerable tact with women, and soon perceived that the common topics of a hack flirtation would not do in the present case. He was therefore very mild and modest, rather piquant, somewhat rational, and apparently perfectly unaffected. Her Ladyship's reserve wore away. She refused to dance, but conversed with more animation. The Duke did not leave her side. The women began to stare, the men to bet: Lady Aphrodite against the field. In vain his Grace laid a thousand plans to arrange a tea-room tête-à-tête. He was unsuccessful. As he was about to return to the charge, her Ladyship desired a passer-by to summon her carriage. No time was to be lost. The Duke began to talk hard about his old friend and schoolfellow, Sir Lucius. A greenhorn would have thought it madness to take an interest in such a person, of all others; but women like you to enter their house as their husband's friend. Lady Aphrodite could not refrain from expressing her conviction that Sir Lucius would be most happy to renew his acquaintance with the Duke of St. James, and the Duke of St. James immediately said that he would take the earliest opportunity of giving him that pleasure.

CHAPTER VIII.

Sir Lucius Grafton was five or six years older than the Duke of St. James, although he had been his contemporary at Eton. He, too, had been a minor, and had inherited an estate capable of supporting the becoming dignity of an ancient family. In appearance, he was an Antinous. There was, however, an expression of firmness, almost of ferocity, about his mouth, which quite prevented his countenance from being effeminate, and broke the dreamy voluptuousness of the rest of his features. In mind, he was a roué. Devoted to pleasure, he had racked the goblet at an early age; and before he was five-and-twenty, procured for himself a reputation which made all women dread and some men shun him. In the very wildest moment of his career, when he was almost marked like Cain, he had met Lady Aphrodite Maltravers. She was the daughter of a nobleman who justly prided himself, in a degenerate age, on the virtue of his house. Nature, as if in recompense for his goodness, had showered all her blessings on his lovely daughter. Never was daughter more devoted to a widowed —never was woman influenced by principles of purer morality.

This was the woman who inspired Sir Lucius Grafton with an ungovernable passion. Despairing of success by any other method, conscious that, sooner or later, he must, for family considerations, propagate future baronets of the name of Grafton, he determined to solicit her hand. But for him to obtain it, he was well aware was difficult. Confident in his person, his consummate knowledge of the female character, and his unrivalled powers of dissimulation, Sir Lucius arranged his dispositions. The daughter feared, the father hated him. There was indeed much to be done; but the remembrance of a thousand triumphs supported the adventurer. Lady Aphrodite was at length persuaded, that she alone could confirm the reformation, which she alone had originated. She yielded to a passion, which her love of virtue had alone kept in subjection. Sir Lucius and Lady Aphrodite knelt at the feet of the old Earl. The tears of his daughter, ay! and of his future son-in-law—for Sir Lucius knew when to weep—were too much for his kind and generous heart. He gave them his blessing, which faltered on his tongue.

A year had not elapsed, ere Lady Aphrodite woke to all the wildness of a deluded woman. The idol on whom she had lavished all the incense of her innocent affections, became every day less like a true divinity. At length, even the ingenuity of passion could no longer disguise the hideous and bitter truth. She was

no longer loved. She thought of her father. Ah, what was the madness of her memory!

The agony of her mind disappointed her husband's hope of an heir, and the promise was never renewed. In vain, she remonstrated with the being to whom she was devoted: in vain, she sought, by meek endurance, again to melt his heart. It was cold—it was callous. Most women would have endeavoured to recover their lost influence by different tactics; some, perhaps, would have forgotten their mortification in their revenge. But Lady Aphrodite had been the victim of passion, and now was its slave. She could not dissemble.

Not so her spouse. Sir Lucius knew too well the value of a good character to part very easily with that which he had so unexpectedly regained. Whatever were his excesses, they were prudent ones. He felt that boyhood could alone excuse the folly of glorying in vice; and he knew that, to respect virtue, it was not absolutely necessary to be virtuous. No one was, apparently, more choice in his companions than Sir Lucius Grafton; no husband was seen oftener with his wife; no one paid more respect to age, or knew better when to wear a grave countenance. The world praised the magical influence of Lady Aphrodite; and Lady Aphrodite, in private, wept over her misery. In public, she made an effort to conceal all she felt; and as it is a great inducement to every woman to conceal that she is neglected by the man whom she adores, her effort was not unsuccessful. Yet her countenance might indicate that she was little interested in the scene in which she mixed. She was too proud to weep, but too sad to smile. Elegant and lone, she stood among her crushed and lovely hopes, like a column amid the ruins of a beautiful temple.

The world declared that Lady Aphrodite was desperately virtuous—and the world was right. A thousand fireflies had sparkled round this myrtle, and its fresh and verdant hue was still unsullied and unscorched. Not a very accurate image, but pretty; and those who have watched a glancing shower of these glittering insects, will confess that, poetically, the bush might burn. The truth is, that Lady Aphrodite still trembled when she recalled the early anguish of her broken sleep of love, and had not courage enough to hope that she might dream again. Like the old Hebrews, she had been so chastened for her wild idolatry, that she dared not again raise an image to animate the wilderness of her existence. Man, she at the same time feared and despised. Compared with her husband, all who surrounded her were, she felt, in appearance, inferior, and were, she believed, in mind, the same.

We know not how it is, but love at first sight is a subject of

constant ridicule; but somehow, we suspect that it has more to do with the affairs of this world than the world is willing to own. Eyes meet which have never met before; and glances thrill with expression which is strange. We contrast these pleasant sights, and new emotions, with hackneyed objects and worn sensations. Another glance, and another thrill—and we spring into each other's arms. What can be more natural?

Ah, that we should awake so often to truth so bitter! Ah, that charm by charm should evaporate from the talisman which had enchanted our existence!

And so it was with this sweet woman, whose feelings grow under the pen. She had repaired to a splendid assembly, to play her splendid part with the consciousness of misery—without the expectation of hope. She awaited, without interest, the routine which had been so often uninteresting; she viewed without emotion the characters which had never moved. A stranger suddenly appeared upon the stage, fresh as the morning dew, and glittering like the morning star. All eyes await—all tongues applaud him. His step is grace—his countenance hope—his voice music! And was such a being born only to deceive and be deceived?—Was he to run the same false, palling, ruinous career, which had filled so many hearts with bitterness, and dimmed the radiancy of so many eyes? Never! The nobility of his soul spoke from his glancing eye, and treated the foul suspicion with scorn. Ah, would that she had such a brother to warn, to guide, to—love!

So felt the Lady Aphrodite! So felt,—we will not say, so reasoned. When once a woman allows an idea to touch her heart, it is miraculous with what rapidity the idea is fathered by her brain. All her experience, all her anguish, all her despair, vanished like a long frost, in an instant, and in a night. She felt a delicious conviction, that a knight had at length come to her rescue, a hero worthy of an adventure so admirable. The image of the young Duke filled her whole mind; she had no ear for others' voices; she mused on his idea with the rapture of a votary on the mysteries of a new faith.

Yet strange, when he at length approached her,—when he addressed her,—when she replied to that mouth which had fascinated even before it had spoken, she was cold, reserved, constrained. Some talk of the burning cheek and the flashing eye of passion; but a wise man would not, perhaps, despair of the heroine who, when he approaches her, treats him almost with scorn, and trembles, while she affects to disregard him.

Lady Aphrodite has returned home: she hurries to her apartment,—she falls into a sweet reverie, her head leans upon her hand. Her soubrette, a pretty and chattering Swiss, whose repub-

lican virtue had been corrupted by Paris, as Rome by Corinth, endeavours to divert her lady's ennui: she excruciates her beautiful mistress with tattle about the admiration of Lord B——, and the sighs of Sir Harry. Her Ladyship reprimands her for her levity, and the soubrette, grown sullen, revenges herself for her mistress' reproof, by converting the sleepy process of brushing, into the most lively torture.

The Duke of St. James called upon Lady Aphrodite Grafton the next day, and at an hour when he trusted to find her alone. He was not disappointed. More than once, the silver-tongued pendule sounded during that somewhat protracted but most agreeable visit. He was, indeed, greatly interested by her, but he was an habitual gallant, and always began by feigning more than he felt. She, on the contrary, who was really in love, feigned much less. Yet she was no longer constrained, though calm. Fluent, and even gay, she talked as well as listened, and her repartees, more than once, called forth the resources of her guest. She displayed a delicate and even luxurious taste, not only in her conversation, but—the Duke observed it with delight—in her costume. She had a passion for music and for flowers; she sang a romance, and she gave him a rose. He retired perfectly fascinated.

CHAPTER IX.

Sir Lucius Grafton called on the Duke of St. James. They did not immediately swear an eternal friendship, but they greeted each other with considerable warmth, talked of old times, and old companions, and compared their former sensations with their present. No one could be a more agreeable companion than Sir Lucius, and this day he left a very favourable impression with his young friend. From this day, too, the Duke's visits at the Baronet's were frequent; and as the Graftons were intimate with the Fitz-pompeys, scarcely a day elapsed without his having the pleasure of passing a portion of it in the company of Lady Aphrodite: his attentions to her were marked, and sometimes mentioned. Lord Fitz-pompey was rather in a flutter. George did not ride so often with Caroline, and never alone with her. This was disagreeable; but the Earl was a man of the world, and a sanguine man withal. These things will happen. It is of no use to quarrel with the wind; and, for his part, he was not sorry that he had the honour of the Grafton acquaintance: it secured Caroline her cousin's

company; and as for the *liaison*, if there were one, why it must end, and probably the difficulty of terminating it might even hasten the catastrophe which he had so much at heart. "So, Laura, dearest! let the Graftons be asked to our dinners."

In one of those rides to which Caroline was not admitted, for Lady Aphrodite was present, the Duke of St. James took his way to the Regent's Park, a wild sequestered spot, whither he invariably repaired when he did not wish to be noticed; for the inhabitants of this pretty suburb are a distinct race, and although their eyes are not unobserving, from their inability to speak the language of London they are unable to communicate their observations.

The spring sun was setting, and flung a crimson flush over the blue waters and the white houses. The scene was rather imposing, and reminded our hero of days of travel. A sudden thought struck him. Would it not be delightful to build a beautiful retreat in this sweet and retired land, and be able in an instant to fly from the formal magnificence of a London mansion? Lady Aphrodite was charmed with the idea; for the enamoured are always delighted with what is fanciful. The Duke determined immediately to convert the idea into an object. To lose no time was his grand motto. As he thought that Sir Carte had enough upon his hands, he determined to apply to an artist whose achievements had been greatly vaunted to him by a distinguished and noble judge.

M. Bijou de Millecolonnes, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, and member of the Academy of St. Luke's, except in his title was the very antipodes of Sir Carte Blanche. Sir Carte was all solidity, solemnity, and correctness—Bijou de Millecolonnes, all lightness, gaiety, and originality. Sir Carte was ever armed with the Parthenon, Palladio, and St. Peter's—Bijou de Millecolonnes laughed at the ancients, called Palladio and Michel barbarians of the middle ages, and had himself invented an order. Bijou was not so plausible as Sir Carte; but he was infinitely more entertaining. Far from being servile, he allowed no one to talk but himself, and made his fortune by his elegant insolence. How singular it is, that those who love servility are always the victims of impertinence!

Gaily did Bijou de Millecolonnes drive his pea-green cabriolet to the spot in question. He formed his plan in an instant. "The occasional retreat of a noble should be something picturesque and poetical. The mind should be led to voluptuousness by exquisite associations, as well as by the creations of art. It is thus their luxury is rendered more intense by the reminiscences that add past experience to present enjoyment! For instance, if you

sail down a river, imitate the progress of Cleopatra. And here—here, where the opportunity is so ample, what think you of reviving the Alhambra?"

Splendid conception! The Duke already fancied himself a Caliph. "Lose no time, Chevalier! Dig, plant, build!"

Nine acres were obtained from the Woods and Forests; mounds were thrown up, shrubs thrown in; the paths emulated the serpent; the nine acres seemed interminable. All was surrounded by a paling eight feet high, that no one might pierce the mystery of the preparations.

A rumour was soon current, that the Zoological Society intended to keep a Bengal tiger *au naturel*, and that they were contriving a residence which would amply compensate him for his native jungle. The Regent's Park was in despair; the landlords lowered their rents, and the tenants petitioned the King. In a short time, some hooded domes and some Saracenic spires rose to sight, and the truth was then made known, that the young Duke of St. James was building a villa. The Regent's Park was in rapture; the landlords raised their rents, and the tenants withdrew their petition.

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Dacre again wrote to the Duke of St. James. He regretted that he had been absent from home when his Grace had done him the honour of calling at Castle Dacre. Had he been aware of that intended gratification, he could with ease, and would with pleasure, have postponed his visit to Norfolk. He also regretted that it would not be in his power to visit London this season; and as he thought that no further time should be lost in esigning the trust with which he had been so honoured, he begged leave to forward his accounts to the Duke, and with them some notes, which he believed would convey some not unimportant information to his Grace for the future management of his property. The young Duke took a rapid glance at the sum total of his rental, crammed all the papers into a cabinet, with a determination to examine them the first opportunity, and then rolled off to a morning concert, of which he was the patron.

The intended opportunity for the examination of the important papers was never caught, nor was it surprising that it escaped capture. It is difficult to conceive a career of more various, more constant, or more distracting excitement, than that in which the

Duke of St. James was now engaged. His life was an ocean of enjoyment, and each hour, like each wave, threw up its pearl. How dull was the ball in which he did not bound! How dim the banquet in which he did not glitter! His presence in the Gardens compensated for the want of flowers,—his vision in the Park, for the want of sun. In public breakfasts, he was more indispensable than pine-apples; in private concerts, more noticed than an absent prima donna. How fair was the dame on whom he smiled! How dark was the tradesman on whom he frowned!

Think only of Prime Ministers and Princes, to say nothing of Princesses—nay! think only of managers of operas and French actors, to say nothing of French actresses,—think only of jewellers, milliners, artists, horse-dealers, all the shoals who hurried for his sanction,—think only of the two or three thousand civilised beings for whom all this population breathed, and who each of them had claims upon our hero's notice! Think of the statesmen, who had so much to ask and so much to give,—the dandies to feed with, and to be fed,—the dangerous dowagers, and the desperate mothers,—the widows, wild as early partridges,—the budding virgins, mild as a summer cloud and soft as an opera hat! Think of the drony bores with their dull hum,—think of the chivalric guardsmen with their horses to sell, and their bills to discount,—think of Willis, think of Crockford, think of White's, think of Brooks'——and you may form a very faint idea how the young Duke had to talk, and eat, and flirt, and cut, and pet, and patronise!

You think it impossible for one man to do all this. There is yet much behind. You may add to the catalogue, Melton and Newmarket; and if to hunt without an appetite, and to bet without an object, will not sicken you, why——build a yacht!

The Duke of St. James gave his first grand entertainment for the season. It was like the assembly of the Immortals at the first levee of Jove. All hurried to pay their devoirs to the young King of Fashion; and each, who succeeded in becoming a member of the Court, felt as proud as a peer with a new title, or a baronet with an old one. An air of regal splendour, an almost imperial assumption, was observed in the arrangements of the fête. A troop of servants in rich liveries filled the hall; grooms lined the staircase; Spiridion, the Greek page, lounged on an ottoman in an ante-chamber, and, with the assistance of six young gentlemen in crimson-and-silver uniforms, announced the coming of the cherished guests. Cart-loads of pine-apples were sent up from the Yorkshire Castle, and waggons of orange-trees from the Twickenham Villa.

A brilliant coterie, of which his Grace was a member, had

amused themselves, a few nights before, by representing in costume the Court of Charles the First. They agreed this night to reappear in their splendid dresses; and the Duke, who was Villiers, supported his character, even to the gay shedding of a shower of diamonds. In his cap was observed an hereditary sapphire, which blazed like a volcano, and which was rumoured to be worth his rent-roll.

There was a short concert, at which the most celebrated Signora made her début; there was a single Vaudeville, which a white satin play-bill, presented to each guest as they entered the temporary theatre, indicated to have been written for the occasion; there was a ball in which was introduced a new dance. Nothing for a moment was allowed to lag. *Longueurs* were skilfully avoided, and the excitement was so rapid, that every one had an appetite for supper.

A long gallery lined with bronzes and *bijouterie*, with cabinets and sculpture, with china and with paintings,—all purchased for the future ornament of Hauteville House, and here stowéd away in unpretending but most artificial confusion, offered accommodation to all the guests. To a table covered with gold, and placed in a magnificent tent upon the stage, his Grace loyally led two princes of the blood, and a child of France. Madame de Protocoli, Lady Aphrodite Grafton, the Duchess of Shropshire, and Lady Fitz-pompey, shared the honours of the pavilion, and some might be excused for envying a party so brilliant, and a situation so distinguished. Yet Lady Aphrodite was an unwilling member of it; and nothing, but the personal solicitation of Sir Lucius, would have induced her to consent to the wish of their host.

A pink *carte* succeeded to the satin play-bill. Vitellius might have been pleased with the banquet. Ah, how shall we describe those soups, which surely must have been the magical elixir! How paint those ortolans dressed by the inimitable artist, à la St. James, for the occasion, and which look so beautiful in death, that they must surely have preferred such an euthanasia, even to flying in the perfumed air of an Ausonian heaven!

Sweet bird! though thou hast lost thy plumage, thou shalt fly to my mistress! Is it not better to be nibbled by her, than mumbled by a cardinal? I, too, will feed on thy delicate beauty. Sweet bird! thy companion has fled to my mistress; and now thou shalt thrill the nerves of her master! Oh! doff, then, thy waistcoat of vine-leaves, pretty rover! and show me that bosom more delicious even than woman's. What gushes of rapture! What a flavour! How peculiar! Even how sacred! Heaven at once sends both manna and quails. Another little wanderer! Pray

follow my example! Allow me. All Paradise opens! Let me die eating ortolans to the sound of soft music!

Even the supper was brief, though brilliant; and again the cotillon and the quadrille, the waltz and the galoppe! At no moment of his life had the young Duke felt existence so intense. Wherever he turned his eye, he found a responding glance of beauty and admiration; wherever he turned his ear, the whispered tones were soft and sweet as summer winds. Each look was an offering, each word adoration! His soul dilated, the glory of the scene touched all his passions. He almost determined not again to mingle in society; but, like a monarch, merely to receive the world which worshipped him. The idea was sublime: was it even to him impracticable? In the midst of his splendour, he fell into a reverie, and mused on his magnificence. He could no longer resist the conviction, that he was a superior essence, even to all around him. The world seemed created solely for his enjoyment. Nor man nor woman could withstand him. From this hour he delivered himself up to a sublime selfishness. With all his passions and all his profusion, a callousness crept over his heart. His sympathy for those he believed his inferiors and his vassals was slight. Where we do not respect, we soon cease to love—when we cease to love, virtue weeps and flies. His soul wandered in dreams of omnipotence.

This picture perhaps excites your dislike—perchance, your contempt. Pause! Pity him! Pity his fatal youth!

CHAPTER XI.

THE Lady Aphrodite at first refused to sit in the Duke's pavilion. Was she, then, in the *habit* of refusing? Let us not forget our Venus of the Waters. Shall we whisper where the young Duke first dared to hope? No, you shall guess. *Je vous le donne en trois.* The Gardens?—The Opera?—The Tea-Room?—No! no! no! You are conceiving a locality much more romantic. Already you have created the bower of a Parisina, where the waterfall is even more musical than the birds, more lulling than the evening winds; where all is pale, except the stars; all hushed, except their beating pulses! Will this do? No! What think you, then, of a BAZAAR?

O thou wonderful nineteenth century!—thou that believest in no miracles, and doest so many, hast thou brought this, too, about, that ladies' hearts should be won—and gentlemen's also—not in

courts of tourney, or halls of revel, but over a counter, and behind a stall? We are, indeed, a nation of shopkeepers!

The king of Otaheite, though a despot, was a reformer. He discovered that the eating of bread-fruit was a barbarous custom, which would infallibly prevent his people from being a great nation. He determined to introduce French rolls. A party rebelled; the despot was energetic; some were executed; the rest ejected. The vagabonds arrived in England. As they had been banished in opposition to French rolls, they were declared to be a British interest. They professed their admiration of civil and religious liberty, and also of a subscription. When they had drunk a great deal of punch, and spent all their money, they discovered that they had nothing to eat, and would infallibly have been starved, had not an Hibernian Marchioness, who had never been in Ireland, been exceedingly shocked that men should die of hunger,—and so, being one of the bustlers, she got up a fancy sale, and a SANDWICH ISLE BAZAAR.

All the world was there, and of course our hero. Never was the arrival of a comet watched by astronomers who had calculated its advent, with more anxiety than was the appearance of the young Duke. Never did man pass through such dangers. It was the fiery ordeal. St. Anthony himself was not assailed by more temptations. Now he was saved from the lustre of a blonde face by the superior richness of a blonde lace. He would infallibly have been ravished by that ringlet, had he not been nearly reduced by that ring, which sparkled on a hand like the white cat's. He was only preserved from his unprecedented dangers by their number. No, no! He had a better talisman—his conceit.

"Ah, Lady Balmont!" said his Grace to a smiling artist, who offered him one of her own drawings of a Swiss cottage, "for me to be a tenant, it must be love and a cottage!"

"What! am I to buy this ring, Mrs. Abercroft? *Point de jour.* Oh! dreadful phrase! Allow me to present it to you, for you are the only one whom such words cannot make tremble."

"This chain, Lady Jemima, for my glass! It will teach me where to direct it."

"Ah! Mrs. Fitzroy!" and he covered his face with affected fear. "Can you forgive me? Your beautiful note has been half an hour unanswered. The box is yours for Tuesday."

He tried to pass the next stall with a smiling bow, but he could not escape. It was Lady de Courcy, a dowager, but not old. Once beautiful, her charms had not yet disappeared. She had a pair of glittering eyes, a skilfully-carmined cheek, and locks yet raven. Her eloquence made her now as conspicuous as once did her beauty The young Duke was her constant object, and her

occasional victim. He hated, above all things, a talking woman; he dreaded, above all others, Lady de Courcy.

He could not shirk. She summoned him by name so loud, that crowds of barbarians stared, and a man called to a woman, and said, "My dear! make haste, here's a Duke!"

Lady de Courcy was prime confidant of the Irish Marchioness. She affected enthusiasm about the poor sufferers. She had learnt Otaheitan—she lectured about the bread-fruit—and she played upon a barbarous thrum-thrum, the only musical instrument in those savage wastes, ironically called the Society Islands, because there is no society. She was dreadful. The Duke in despair took out his purse, poured forth from the pink and silver delicacy, worked by the slender fingers of Lady Aphrodite, a shower of sovereigns, and fairly scampered off. At length he reached the lady of his heart.

"I fear," said the young Duke with a smile, and in a soft sweet voice, "that you will never speak to me again, for I am a ruined man."

A beam of gentle affection reprimanded him even for badinage on such a subject.

"I really came here to buy up all your stock; but that gorgon, Lady de Courcy, captured me, and my ransom has sent me here free, but a beggar. I do not know a more ill-fated fellow than myself. Now, if you had only condescended to take me prisoner, I might have saved my money; for I should have kissed my chain."

"My chains, I fear, are neither very alluring, nor very strong." She spoke with a thoughtful air, and he answered her only with his eye.

"I must bear off something from your stall," he resumed in a more rapid and gayer tone, "and as I cannot purchase, you must present. Now for a gift!"

"Choose!"

"Yourself."

"Your Grace is really spoiling my sale. See! poor Lord Bagshot. What a valuable purchaser!"

"Ah! Bag, my boy!" said the Duke to a slang young nobleman whom he abhorred, but of whom he sometimes made a butt, "am I in your way? Here! take this, and this, and this, and give me your purse. I'll pay Lady Aphrodite." And so the Duke again showered some sovereigns, and returned the shrunken silk to its defrauded owner, who stared, and would have remonstrated, but his Grace turned his back upon him.

"There now," he continued to Lady Aphrodite, "there is two hundred per cent. profit for you. You are not half a *marchande*.

I will stand here, and be your shopman. Well, Annesley," said he, as that dignitary passed, "what will you buy? I advise you to get a place. 'Pon my soul, 'tis pleasant! Try Lady de Courcy. You know you are a favourite."

"I assure your Grace," said Mr. Annesley, speaking very slowly, "that that story about Lady de Courcy is quite untrue, and very rude. I never turn my back on any woman, only my heel. We are on the best possible terms. She is never to speak to me, and I am always to bow to her. But I really must purchase. Where did you get that glass-chain, St. James? Lady Afy, can you accommodate me?",

"Here is one prettier! But are you near-sighted too, Mr. Annesley?"

"Very. I look upon a long-sighted man as a brute who, not being able to see with his mind, is obliged to see with his body. The price of this?"

"A sovereign," said the Duke—"cheap; but we consider you as a friend."

"A sovereign! You consider me a young Duke rather. Two shillings, and that a severe price—a charitable price. Here is half-a-crown—give me sixpence. I was not a minor. Farewell! I go to the little Pomfret. She is a sweet flower, and I intend to wear her in my button-hole. Good bye, Lady Afy!"

The gay morning had worn away, and St. James never left his fascinating position. Many a sweet and many a soft thing he uttered. Sometimes he was baffled, but never beaten, and always returned to the charge with spirit. He was confident, because he was reckless: the lady had less trust in herself, because she was anxious. Yet she combated well, and repressed the passion which she could hardly conceal.

Many of her colleagues had already departed. She requested the Duke to look after her carriage. A bold plan suddenly occurred to him, and he executed it with rare courage and rarer felicity.

"Lady Aphrodite Grafton's carriage!"

"Here, your Grace!"

"Oh! go home. Your Lady will return with Madame de Protocoli."

He rejoined her.

"I am sorry that, by some blunder, your carriage has gone. What could you have told them?"

"Impossible! How provoking! How stupid!"

"Perhaps you told them that you would return with the Fitzpompeys, but they are gone; or, Mrs. Aberleigh, and she is not here:—or, perhaps,—but they have gone too. Every one has gone."

"What shall I do? How distressing! I had better send. Pray, send; or I will ask Lady de Courcy."

"Oh! no, no! I really did not like to see you with her. As a favour—as a favour to me, I pray you not."

"What can I do? I must send. Let me beg your Grace to send."

"Certainly, certainly; but, ten to one, there will be some mistake. There always is some mistake when you send these strangers. And besides, I forgot, all this time my carriage is here. Let it take you home."

"No, no!"

"Dearest Lady Aphrodite, do not distress yourself. I can wait here till the carriage returns, or I can walk; to be sure, I can walk. Pray, pray take the carriage! As a favour—as a favour to me!"

"But I cannot bear you to walk. I know you dislike walking."

"Well, then, I will wait."

"Well, if it must be so—but I am ashamed to inconvenience you. How provoking of these men! Pray, then, tell the coachman to drive fast, that you may not have to wait. I declare, there is scarcely a human being in the room; and those odd people are staring so!"

He pressed her arm, as he led her to his carriage. She is in; and yet, before the door shuts, he lingers.

"I shall certainly walk," said he. "I do not think the easterly wind will make me very ill. Good bye! Oh, what a *coup de vent!*"

"Let me get out, then; and pray, pray take the carriage. I would much sooner do anything than go in it. I would much rather walk. I am sure you will be ill!"

"Not if I be with you.'

CHAPTER XII.

THERE was a brilliant levee,—all stars and garters; and a splendid drawing-room,—all plumes and *seduisantes*. Many a bright eye, as its owner fought his way down St. James' Street, shot a wistful glance at the enchanted bow-window, where the Duke and his usual companions, Sir Lucius, Charles Annesley, and Lord Squib, lounged and laughed, stretched themselves, and sneered: many a bright eye, that for a moment pierced the futurity, that painted her going in state as Duchess of St. James.

His Majesty summoned a dinner party, a rare but magnificent event,—and the chief of the house of Hauteville appeared among the chosen vassals. This visit did the young Duke good; and a few more might have permanently cured the conceit, which the present one momentarily calmed. His Grace saw the plate, and was filled with envy; his Grace listened to his Majesty, and was filled with admiration. O, father of thy people! if thou wouldst but look a little oftener on thy younger sons, their morals and their manners might be alike improved.

His Majesty, in the course of the evening, with his usual good-nature, signalled out for his notice the youngest, and not the least distinguished, of his guests. He complimented the young Duke on the accession to the ornaments of his court, and said, with a smile, that he had heard of conquests in foreign ones. The Duke accounted for his slight successes by reminding his Majesty, that he had the honour of being his godson,—and this he said in a slight and easy way, not smart or quick, or as a repartee to the royal observation—for "it is not decorous to bandy compliments with your Sovereign." His Majesty asked some questions about an Emperor, or an Archduchess, and his Grace answered to the purpose, but short, and not too pointed. He listened rather than spoke, and smiled more assents than he uttered. The King was pleased with his young subject, and marked his approbation by conversing with that unrivalled affability, which is gall to a Roundhead, and inspiration to a Cavalier. There was a *bon mot*, which blazed with all the soft brilliancy of sheet lightning. What a contrast to the forky flashes of a regular wit! Then there was an anecdote of Sheridan —the royal Sheridaniana are not thrice-told tales—recounted with that curious felicity, which has long stamped the illustrious narrator as a consummate *raconteur*. Then——but the Duke knew when to withdraw; and he withdrew with renewed loyalty.

CHAPTER XIII.

One day, looking in at his jeweller's, to see some models of a shield and vases, which were executing for him in gold, the young Duke met Lady Aphrodite and the Fitz-pompeys. Lady Aphrodite was speaking to the jeweller about her diamonds, which were to be reset for her approaching fête. The Duke took the ladies up-stairs to look at the models, and while they were intent upon them and other curiosities, his absence for a moment was unperceived. He ran down-stairs and caught Mr. Garnet.

"Mr. Garnet! I think, I saw Lady Aphrodite give you her diamonds?"

"Yes, your Grace."

"Are they valuable?" in a careless tone.

"Hum! very pretty stones,—very pretty stones indeed. Few Baronets' ladies have a prettier set,—worth perhaps a 1000*l.*—say 1200*l.* Lady Aphrodite Grafton is not the Duchess of St. James, you know," said Mr. Garnet, as if he anticipated furnishing that future lady with a very different set of brilliants.

"Mr. Garnet, you can do me the greatest favour."

"Your Grace has only to command me at all times."

"Well then, in a word, for time presses. Can you contrive, without particularly altering, that is, without altering the general appearance of these diamonds,—can you contrive to change the stones, and substitute the most valuable that you have—consistent, as I must impress upon you, with maintaining their general appearance, as at present?"

"The most valuable stones," musingly repeated Mr. Garnet,—"general appearance, as at present? Your Grace is aware, that we may run up some thousands even in this set?"

"I give you no limit."

"But the time," rejoined Mr. Garnet. "They must be ready for her Ladyship's party. We shall be hard pressed. I am afraid of the time."

"Cannot the men work all night? Pay them anything."

"It shall be done, your Grace. Your Grace may command me in anything."

"This is a secret between us, Garnet. Your partners——"

"Shall know nothing. And as for myself, I am as close as an emerald in a seal-ring."

CHAPTER XIV.

HUSSEIN PACHA, "the favourite," not only of the Marquess of Mash, but of Tattersall's, unaccountably sickened, and died. His noble master, full of chagrin, took to his bed, and followed his steed's example. The death of the Marquess caused a vacancy in the stewardship of the approaching Doncaster. Sir Lucius Grafton was the other steward, and he proposed to the Duke of St. James, as he was a Yorkshireman, to become his colleague. His Grace, who wished to pay a compliment to his county, closed with the proposition. Sir Lucius was a first-rate jockey; his colleague was quite ignorant of the noble science in all its details, but that was of slight importance. The Baronet was to be the working partner, and do the business,—the Duke, the show member of the concern, and do the magnificence: as one banker, you may observe, lives always in Portland Place, reads the Court Journal all the morning, and has an Opera-box, while his partner lodges in Lombard Street, thumbs a Price-Current, and only has a box at Clapham.

The young Duke, however, was ambitious of making a good book; and, with all the calm impetuosity which characterises a youthful Hauteville, determined to have a crack stud at once. So at Ascot, where he spent a few pleasant hours, dined at the Cottage, was caught in a shower, in return caught a cold, a slight influenza for a week, and all the world full of inquiries and anxiety,—at Ascot, I say, he bought up all the winning horses at an average of three thousand guineas for each pair of ears. Sir Lucius stared, remonstrated, and, as his remonstrances were in vain, assisted him.

As people on the point of death often make a desperate rally, so this, the most brilliant of seasons, was even more lively as it nearer approached its end. The déjeûner and the villa fête, the water party and the rambling ride, followed each other with the bright rapidity of the final scenes in a Pantomime. Each *dama* seemed only inspired with the ambition of giving the last ball; and so numerous were the parties, that the town really sometimes seemed illuminated. To breakfast at Twickenham, and to dine in Belgrave Square; to hear, or rather to honour, half an act of an opera; to campaign through half a dozen private balls, and to finish with a romp at the rooms, as after our wine we take a glass of liqueur—all this surely required the courage of an Alexander, and the strength of a Hercules, and, indeed, cannot be achieved without the miraculous powers of a Joshua. So thought the young Duke, as with an excited mind and a whirling head he threw himself at half-past six o'clock on a couch which brought him no sleep.

Yet he recovered, and with the aid of the bath, the soda, and the coffee, and all the thousand remedies which a skilful valet has ever at hand, at three o'clock on the same day he rose and dressed, and in an hour was again at the illustrious bow-window, sneering with Charles Annesley, or laughing downright with Lord Squib.

The Duke of St. James gave a water party, and the astounded Thames swelled with pride, as his broad breast bore on the ducal barges. St. Maurice, who was in the Guards, secured his band; and Lord Squib, who, though it was July, brought a furred great coat, secured himself. Lady Afy looked like Amphitrite, and Lady Caroline looked—in love. They wandered in gardens like Calypso's; they rambled over a villa, which reminded them of Baiæ; they partook of a banquet which should have been described by Ariosto. All were delighted: they delivered themselves to the charms of an unrestrained gaiety. Even Charles Annesley laughed and romped.

"This is the only mode in which public eating is essentially agreeable. A banqueting-hall is often the scene of exquisite pleasure; but that is not so much excited by the gratification of a delicate palate, as by the magnificent effect of light and shade—by the beautiful women, the radiant jewels, the graceful costume, the rainbow glass, the glowing wines, the glorious plate. For the rest, all is too hot, too crowded, and too noisy, to catch a flavour—to analyse a combination—to dwell upon a gust. To eat—*really*, to eat, one must eat alone, with a soft light, with simple furniture, an easy dress, and a single dish—at a time. Hours of bliss! Hours of virtue!—for what is more virtuous than to be conscious of the blessings of a bountiful Nature? A good eater must be a good man; for a good eater must have a good digestion, and a good digestion depends upon a good conscience.

But to our tale. If we be dull,—skip: time will fly, and beauty will fade, and wit grow dull, and even the season, although it seems, for the nonce, like the existence of Olympus, will, nevertheless steal away. It is the hour when trade grows dull, and tradesmen grow duller:—it is the hour that Howell loveth not, and Stultz cannot abide; though the first may be consoled by the ghosts of his departed millions of *mouchoirs*—and the second, by the vision of coming millions of shooting jackets. Oh, why that sigh, my gloomy Mr. Gunter! Oh, why that frown, my gentle Mrs. Grange!

One by one, the great houses shut:—shoal by shoal, the little people sail away. Yet beauty lingers still. Still the magnet of a straggling ball attracts the remaining brilliants; still, a lagging dinner, like a sumpter-mule on a march, is a mark for plunder.

The Park, too, is not yet empty, and perhaps is even more fascinating—like a beauty in a consumption, who each day gets thinner and more fair. The young Duke remained to the last—for we linger about our first season, as we do about our first mistress, rather wearied, yet full of delightful reminiscences.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

LADY APHRODITE and the Duke of St. James were for the first time parted; and with an absolute belief on the lady's side, and an avowed conviction on the gentleman's, that it was impossible to live asunder, they separated, her Ladyship shedding some temporary tears, and his Grace vowing eternal fidelity.

It was the crafty Lord Fitz-pompey who brought about this catastrophe. Having secured his nephew as a visitor to Malthorpe, by allowing him to believe that the Graftons would form part of the summer coterie, his Lordship took especial care that poor Lady Aphrodite should not be invited. "Once part them, once get him to Malthorpe alone," mused the experienced Peer, "and he will be emancipated. I am doing him, too, the greatest kindness. What would I have given, when a young man, to have had such an uncle!"

The Morning Post announced with a sigh the departure of the Duke of St. James to the splendid festivities of Malthorpe; and also apprised the world that Sir Lucius and Lady Aphrodite were entertaining a numerous and distinguished party at their seat, Cleve Park, Cambridgeshire.

There was a constant bustle kept up at Malthorpe, and the young Duke was hourly permitted to observe, that, independent of all private feeling, it was impossible for the most distinguished nobleman to ally himself with a more considered family. There was a continual swell of guests, dashing down, and dashing away like the ocean—brilliant as its foam, numerous as its waves. But there was one permanent inhabitant of this princely mansion far more interesting to our hero, than the evanescent crowds who rose like bubbles, glittered, broke, and disappeared.

Once more wandering in that park of Malthorpe, where had passed the most innocent days of his boyhood, his thoughts naturally recurred to the sweet companion who had made even those hours of happiness more felicitous. Here they had rambled,—here they had first tried their ponies,—there they had nearly fallen,—there he had quite saved her,—here were the two very elms where St. Maurice made for them a swing—here was the very keeper's cottage of which she had made for him a drawing, and

which he still retained. Dear girl! And had she disappointed the romance of his boyhood,—had the experience the want of which had allowed him then to be pleased so easily, had it taught him to be ashamed of those days of affection? Was she not now the most gentle, the most graceful, the most beautiful, the most kind? Was she not the most wife-like woman whose eyes had ever beamed with tenderness? Why, why not at once close a career which, though short, yet already could yield reminiscences which might satisfy the most craving admirer of excitement? But there was Lady Aphrodite; yet that must end. Alas! on his part, it had commenced in levity; he feared, on hers, it must terminate in anguish. Yet, though he loved his cousin—though he could not recall to his memory the woman who was more worthy of being his wife, he could not also conceal from himself, that the feelings which impelled him were hardly so romantic as he thought should have inspired a youth of one-and-twenty, when he mused on the woman he loved best. But he knew life, and he felt convinced, that a mistress and a wife must always be different characters. A combination of passion with present respect, and permanent affection, he supposed to be the delusion of romance writers. He thought he must marry Caroline, partly because he must marry sooner or later; partly because he had never met a woman whom he had loved so much, and partly because he felt he should be miserable, if her destiny in life were not, in some way or other, connected with his own. "Ah! if she had but been my sister!"

After a little more cogitation, the young Duke felt very much inclined to make his cousin a Duchess; but time did not press. After Doncaster, he must spend a few weeks at Cleve, and then he determined to come to an explanation with Lady Aphrodite. In the meantime, Lord Fitz-pompey secretly congratulated himself on his skilful policy, as he perceived his nephew daily more engrossed with his daughter. Lady Caroline, like all unaffected and accomplished women, was seen to great effect in the country. There, while they feed their birds, tend their flowers, and tune their harp, and perform those more sacred, but not less pleasing, duties which become the daughter of a great proprietor, they favourably contrast with those more modish damsels, who, the moment they are freed from the Park, and from Willis', begin fighting for silver arrows, and patronising county balls.

September came, and brought some relief to those who were suffering in the inferno of provincial ennui; but this is only the purgatory to the Paradise of Battus. Yet September has its days of slaughter; and the young Duke gained some laurels, with the aid of friend Egg, friend Purdy, and Manton. And the Premier galloped down sixty miles in one morning. He sacked his cover,

made a light bet with St. James on the favourite, lunched standing, and was off before night; for he had only three days' holiday, and had to visit Lord Protest, Lord Content, and Lord Proxy. So, having knocked off four of his crack peers, he galloped back to London to flog up his secretaries.

And the young Duke was off too. He had promised to spend a week with Charles Annesley and Lord Squib, who had taken some Norfolk Baronet's seat for the autumn, and while he was at Spa, were thinning his preserves. It *was* a week! What fantastic dissipation! One day, the brains of three hundred hares made a *pâté* for Charles Annesley. Oh, Heliogabalus! you gained eternal fame for what is now "done in a corner!"

CHAPTER II.

THE Carnival of the North at length arrived. All civilised eyes were on the most distinguished party of the most distinguished steward, who with his horse, Sanspareil, seemed to share universal favour. The French Princes, and the Duke of Burlington; the Protoclis, and the Fitz-pompeys, and the Bloomerlys; the Duke and Duchess of Shropshire, and the three Ladies Wrekin, who might have passed for the Graces; Lord and Lady Vatican on a visit from Rome, his Lordship taking hints for a heat in the Corso, and her Ladyship, a classical beauty with a face like a Cameo; St. Maurice, and Annesley, and Squib, composed the party. The Premier was expected, and there was murmur of an Archduke. Seven houses had been prepared,—a party-wall knocked down to make a dining-room,—the plate sent down from London, and venison and wine from Hauteville.

The assemblage exceeded in quantity and quality all preceding years, and the Hauteville arms, the Hauteville liveries, and the Hauteville outriders, beat all hollow in blazonry, and brilliancy, and number. The North countrymen were proud of their young Duke and his carriages and six, and longed for the Castle to be finished. Nothing could exceed the propriety of the arrangements, for Sir Lucius was an unrivalled hand, and though a Newmarket man, gained universal approbation even in Yorkshire. Lady Aphrodite was all smiles and new liveries, and the Duke of St. James reined in his charger right often at her splendid equipage.

The day's sport was over, and the evening's sport begun,—to a quiet man, who has no bet more heavy than a dozen pair of gloves, perhaps not the least amusing. Now came the numerous dinner-

parties, none to be compared to that of the Duke of St. James. Lady Aphrodite was alone wanting, but she had to head the *ménage* of Sir Lucius. Every one has an appetite after a race: the Duke of Shropshire attacked the venison, like Samson the Philistines; and the French princes, for once in their life, drank real Champagne.

Yet all faces were not so serene as those of the party of Hauteville. Many a one felt that strange mixture of fear and exultation, which precedes a battle. To-morrow was the dreaded St. Leger.

'Tis night, and the banquet is over, and all are hastening to the ball.

In spite of the brilliant crowd, the entrance of the Hauteville party made a sensation. It was the crowning ornament to the scene—the stamp of the sovereign,—the lamp of the Pharos,—the flag of the tower. The party dispersed, and the Duke, after joining a quadrille with Lady Caroline, wandered away to make himself generally popular.

As he was moving along, he turned his head;—he started.

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed his Grace.

The cause of this sudden and ungovernable exclamation can be no other than a woman.—You are right. The lady who had excited it was advancing in a quadrille, some ten yards from her admirer. She was very young, that is to say, she had, perhaps, added a year or two to sweet seventeen, an addition which, while it does not deprive the sex of the early grace of girlhood, adorns them with that indefinable dignity, which is necessary to constitute a perfect woman. She was not tall, but as she moved forward, displayed a figure so exquisitely symmetrical, that, for a moment, the Duke forgot to look at her face, and then her head was turned away; yet he was consoled a moment for his disappointment by watching the movements of a neck so white, and round, and long, and delicate, that it would have become Psyche, and might have inspired Praxiteles. Her face is again turning towards him. It stops too soon, yet his eye feeds upon the outline of a cheek not too full, yet promising of beauty, like Hope of Paradise.

She turns her head, she throws around a glance, and two streams of liquid light pour from her hazel eyes on his. It was a rapid, graceful movement, unstudied as the motion of a fawn, and was in a moment withdrawn, yet was it long enough to stamp upon his memory a memorable countenance. Her face was quite oval, her nose delicately aquiline, and her high pure forehead like a Parian dome. The clear blood coursed under her transparent cheek, and increased the brilliancy of her dazzling eyes. His never left her. There was an expression of decision about her small mouth—an

air of almost mockery in her curling lip, which, though in themselves wildly fascinating, strangely contrasted with all the beaming light and beneficent lustre of the upper part of her countenance. There was something, too, in the graceful but rather decided air with which she moved, that seemed to betoken her self-consciousness of her beauty or her rank; perhaps it might be her wit: for the Duke observed, that while she scarcely smiled, and conversed with lips hardly parted, her companion, with whom she was evidently very intimate, was almost constantly convulsed with laughter, although, as he never spoke, it was clearly not at his own jokes.

Was she married? Could it be? Impossible! Yet there was a richness in her costume, which was not usual for unmarried women. A diamond arrow had pierced her clustering and auburn locks; she wore, indeed, no necklace—(with such a neck it would have been sacrilege)—no ear-rings, for her ears were too small for such a burthen; yet her girdle was of brilliants; and a diamond cross worthy of Belinda and her immortal bard hung upon her breast.

The Duke seized hold of the first person he knew:—it was Lord Bagshot.

"Tell me," he said, in the stern, low voice of a despot—"tell me who that creature is?"

"Which creature?" asked Lord Bagshot.

"Booby! brute! Bag,—that creature of light and love!"

"Where?"

"There!"

"What, my mother?"

"Your mother! cub! cart-horse! answer me, or I will run you through."

"Who do you mean?"

"There, there, dancing with that raw-boned youth with red hair."

"What, Lord St. Jerome! Lord! he is a Catholic. I never speak to them. My governor would be so savage."

"But the girl!"

"Oh! the girl! Lord! she is a Catholic too."

"But who is she?"

"Lord! don't you know?"

"Speak, hound—speak!"

"Lord! that is the beauty of the county; but then she is a Catholic. How shocking! Blow us all up as soon as look at us."

"If you do not tell me who she is directly, you shall never get into White's. I will black-ball you regularly."

"Lord! man, don't be in a passion. I will tell. But then I

know you know all the time. You are joking. Everybody knows the beauty of the county—everybody knows May Dacre."

"May Dacre!" said the Duke of St. James, as if he were shot.

"Why, what is the matter now?" asked Lord Bagshot.

"What, the daughter of Dacre of Castle Dacre?" pursued his Grace.

"The very same; the beauty of the county. Everybody knows May Dacre. I knew, you knew her all the time. You did not take me in. Why, what is the matter?"

"Nothing; get away!"

"Civil! But you will remember your promise about White's?"

"Ay! ay! I shall remember you when you are proposed."

"Here—here is a business!" soliloquized the young Duke. "May Dacre! What a fool I have been! Shall I shoot myself through the head, or embrace her on the spot? Lord St. Jerome too! He seems mightily pleased. And my family have been voting for two centuries to emancipate this fellow! Curse his grinning face! I am decidedly anti-Catholic. But then she is a Catholic! I will turn Papist. Ah! there is Lucy. I want a counsellor."

He turned to his fellow steward—"Oh, Lucy! such a woman! such an incident!"

"What! the inimitable Miss Dacre, I suppose. Everybody speaking of her—wherever I go, one subject of conversation. Burlington wanting to waltz with her, Charles Annesley being introduced, and Lady Bloomerly decidedly of opinion, that she is the finest creature in the county. Well, have you danced with her?"

"Danced, my dear fellow! Do not speak to me."

"What is the matter?"

"The most diabolical matter that you ever heard of."

"Well, well?"

"I have not even been introduced."

"Well! come on at once."

"I cannot."

"Are you mad?"

"Worse than mad. Where is her father?"

"Who cares?"

"I do. In a word, my dear Lucy, her father is that guardian, whom I have perhaps mentioned to you, and to whom I have behaved so delicately."

"Why! I thought your guardian was an old curmudgeon."

"What does that signify, with such a daughter!"

"Oh! here is some mistake. This is the only child of Dacre, of Castle Dacre, a most delightful fellow—one of the first fellows in the county—I was introduced to him to-day on the course. I

thought you knew them. You were admiring his outriders to-day —the green and silver."

"Why, Bag told me they were old Lord Sunderland's."

"Bag! How can you believe a word of that booby? He always has an answer. To-day, when Afy drove in, I asked Bag who she was, and he said it was his aunt, Lady de Courcy. I begged to be introduced, and took over the blushing Bag and presented him."

"But the father—the father, Lucy! How shall I get out of this scrape?"

"Oh! put on a bold face. Here! give him this ring, and swear you procured it for him at Genoa, and then say, that now you are here, you will try his pheasants."

"My dear fellow, you always joke. I am in agony. Seriously, what shall I do?"

"Why, seriously, be introduced to him, and do what you can."

"Which is he?"

"At the extreme end, next to the very pretty woman, who, by-the-bye, I recommend to your notice—Mrs. Dallington Vere. She is very amusing. I know her well. She is some sort of relation to your Dacres. I will present you to both at once."

"Why! I will think of it."

"Well, then! I must away. The two stewards knocking their heads together is rather out of character. Do you know, it is raining hard? I am cursedly nervous about to-morrow."

"Pooh! pooh! If I could get through to-night, I should not care for to-morrow."

CHAPTER III.

As Sir Lucius hurried off, his colleague advanced towards the upper end of the room, and taking up a position, made his observations, through the shooting figures of the dancers, on the dreaded Mr. Dacre.

The late guardian of the Duke of St. James was in the perfection of manhood; perhaps five-and-forty by age; but his youth had lingered long. He was tall, thin, and elegant, with a mild and benevolent expression of countenance, not unmixed, however, with a little reserve, the ghost of youthly pride. Listening with polished and courtly bearing to the pretty Mrs. Dallington Vere, assenting occasionally to her piquant observations by a slight bow, or expressing his dissent by a still slighter smile, seldom himself

speaking, yet always with that unembarrassed manner which makes a saying listened to, Mr. Dacre was altogether, in appearance, one of the most distinguished personages in this distinguished assembly. The young Duke fell into an attitude worthy of Hamlet—"This, then, is *old* Dacre! O, deceitful Fitz-pompey! O, silly St. James! Could I ever forget that tall, mild man, who now is perfectly fresh in my memory? Ah! that memory of mine—it has been greatly developed to-night. Would that I had cultivated that faculty with a little more zeal! But what am I to do? The case is urgent. What must the Dacres think of me? What must May Dacre think? On the course the whole day, and I the Steward, and not conscious of the presence of the family in the Riding! Fool, fool! Why—why did I accept an office for which I was totally unfitted? Why—why must I flirt away a whole morning with that silly Sophy Wrekin? An agreeable predicament, truly, this! What would I give now, once more to be in St. James' Street! Confound my Yorkshire estates! How they must dislike—how they must despise me! And now, truly, I am to be *introduced* to him! The Duke of St. James—Mr. Dacre! Mr. Dacre—the Duke of St. James! What an insult to all parties! How supremely ludicrous! What a mode of offering my gratitude to the man to whom I am under solemn and inconceivable obligations! A choice way, truly, to salute the bosom-friend of my sire, the guardian of my interests, the creator of my property, the fosterer of my orphan infancy! It is useless to conceal it; I am placed in the most disagreeable, the most inextricable situation.

"Inextricable! Am I, then, the Duke of St. James,—am I that being who, two hours ago, thought that the world was formed alone for my enjoyment, and I quiver and shrink here like a common hind? Out—out on such craven cowardice! I am no Hauteville! I am bastard! Never! I will not be crushed. I will struggle with this emergency, I will conquer it. Now aid me, ye heroes of my house! On the sands of Palestine, on the plains of France, ye were not in a more difficult situation than is your descendant in a ball-room in his own county. My mind elevates itself to the occasion,—my courage expands with the enterprise,—I will right myself with these Dacres, with honour, and without humiliation."

The dancing ceased,—the dancers disappeared. There was a blank between the Duke of St. James on one side of the broad room, and Mr. Dacre and those with whom he was conversing on the other. Many eyes were on his Grace, and he seized the opportunity to execute his purpose. He advanced across the chamber with the air of a young monarch greeting a victorious

general. It seemed that, for a moment, his Majesty wished to destroy all difference of rank between himself and the man that he honoured. So studied, and so inexpressibly graceful were his movements, that the gaze of all around involuntarily fixed upon him. Mrs. Dallington Vere unconsciously refrained from speaking as he approached; and one or two, without actually knowing his purpose, made way. They seemed awed by his dignity, and shuffled behind Mr. Dacre, as if he were the only person who was the Duke's match.

"Mr. Dacre," said his Grace, in the softest but still audible tones, and he extended, at the same time, his hand—"Mr. Dacre, our first meeting should have been neither here, nor thus; but you, who have excused so much, will pardon also this!"

Mr. Dacre, though a calm personage, was surprised by this sudden address. He could not doubt who was the speaker. He had left his ward a mere child. He saw before him the exact and breathing image of the heart-friend of his ancient days. He forgot all but the memory of a cherished friendship. He was greatly affected; he pressed the offered hand; he advanced; he moved aside. The young Duke followed up his advantage, and, with an air of the greatest affection, placed Mr. Dacre's arm in his own, and then bore off his prize in triumph.

Right skilfully did our hero avail himself of his advantage. He spoke, and he spoke with emotion. There is something inexpressibly captivating in the contrition of a youthful and a generous mind. Mr. Dacre and his late ward soon understood each other—for it was one of those meetings which sentiment makes sweet.

"And now," said his Grace, "I have one more favour to ask, and that is the greatest—I wish to be recalled to the recollection of my oldest friend."

Mr. Dacre led the Duke to his daughter; and the Earl of St. Jerome, who was still laughing at her side, rose.

"The Duke of St. James, May, wishes to renew his acquaintance with you."

She bowed in silence. Lord St. Jerome, who was the great oracle of the Yorkshire School, and who had betted desperately against the favourite, took Mr. Dacre aside to consult him about the rain, and the Duke of St. James dropped into his chair. That tongue, however, which had never failed him, for once was wanting. There was a momentary silence, which the lady would not break; and at last her companion broke it, and not felicitously.

"I think there is nothing more delightful than meeting with old friends."

"Yes! that is the usual sentiment; but I half suspect that it is a commonplace, invented to cover our embarrassment under

such circumstances; for, after all, 'an old friend' so situated is a person whom we have not seen for many years, and most probably not cared to see."

"You are indeed severe."

"Oh! no. I think there is nothing more painful than parting with old friends; but when we have parted with them, I am half afraid they are lost."

"Absence, then, with you is fatal?"

"Really, I never did part with any one I greatly loved; but I suppose it is with me as with most persons."

"Yet you have resided abroad, and for many years?"

"Yes; but I was too young then to have many friends; and, in fact, I accompanied perhaps all that I possessed."

"How I regret that it was not in my power to accept your kind invitation to Dacre in the Spring!"

"Oh! My father would have been very glad to see you; but we really are dull kind of people, not at all in your way,—and I really do not think that you lost much amusement."

"What better amusement—what more interesting occupation could I have had than to visit the place where I passed my earliest and my happiest hours? 'Tis nearly fifteen years since I was at Dacre."

"Except when you visited us at Easter. We regretted our loss."

"Ah! yes! except that," exclaimed the Duke, remembering his jager's call; "but that goes for nothing. I of course saw very little."

"Yet, I assure you, you made a great impression. So eminent a personage, of course, observes less than he himself is observed. We had a graphical description of you on our return, and a very accurate one too,—for I recognised your Grace to-night merely from the report of your visit."

The Duke shot a shrewd glance at his companion's face, but it betrayed no indication of badinage, and so, rather puzzled, he thought it best to put up with the parallel between himself and his servant. But Miss Dacre did not quit this agreeable subject with all that promptitude which he fondly anticipated.

"Poor Lord St. Jerome," said she, "who is really the most unaffected person I know, has been complaining most bitterly of his deficiency in the *air noble*. He is mistaken for a groom perpetually; and once, he says, had a douceur presented to him in his character of an ostler. Your Grace must be proud of your advantage over him. You would have been gratified by the universal panegyric of our household. They, of course, you know, are proud of their young Duke, a real Yorkshire Duke, and they love

to dwell upon your truly imposing appearance. As for myself, who am true Yorkshire also, I take the most honest pride in hearing them describe your elegant attitude, leaning back in your britzska, with your feet on the opposite cushions, your hat arranged aside with that air of undefinable grace characteristic of the Grand Seigneur, and, which is the last remnant of the feudal system, your reiterated orders to drive over an old woman. You did not even condescend to speak English, which made them quite—enthusiastic."

"O, Miss Dacre, spare me!"

"Spare you! I have heard of your Grace's modesty; but this excessive sensibility, under well-earned praise, does indeed surprise me!"

"But, Miss Dacre, you cannot indeed really believe that this vulgar ruffian, this grim scarecrow, this Guy Faux, was—was—myself."

"Not yourself! Really I am a simple personage. I believe in my eyes, and trust to my ears. I am at a loss for your Grace's meaning."

"I mean, then," said his Grace, who had gained time to rally, "that this monster was some impostor, who must have stolen my carriage, picked my pocket, and robbed me of my card, which, next to his reputation, is a man's most delicate possession."

"Then you never called upon us?"

"I blush to confess it—never; but I will call, in future, every day."

"Your Grace's ingenuousness really rivals your modesty."

"Now, after these confessions and compliments, I suggest a waltz."

"No one is waltzing now."

"When the quadrille, then, is finished?"

"Then I am engaged."

"After your engagement?"

"Oh, impossible! That is indeed making a business of pleasure. I have just refused a similar request of your fellow-steward. We damsels shall soon be obliged to carry a book to enrol our engagements as well as our bets, if this system of reversionary dancing be any longer encouraged."

"But you must dance with me!" said the Duke, imploringly.

"Oh! you will stumble upon me in the course of the evening, and I shall probably be more fortunate. I suppose you feel nervous about to-morrow?"

"Oh, no! not at all."

"Ah! I forgot. Your Grace's horse is the favourite. Favourites always win."

"Have I a horse?"

"Why, Lord St. Jerome says, he doubts whether it be one."

"Lord St. Jerome seems a vastly amusing personage; and as he is so often taken for an ostler, I have no doubt is an exceedingly good judge of horseflesh."

Miss Dacre smiled. It was that wild, but rather wicked gleam, which sometimes accompanies the indulgence of innocent malice. It seemed to insinuate, "I know you are piqued, and I enjoy it." But here her hand was claimed for the waltz.

The young Duke remained musing.

"There she swims away! By Heavens! unrivalled! And there is Lady Afy and Burlington—grand too. Yet there is something in this little Dacre which touches my fancy more. What is it? I think it is her impudence. That confounded scrape of Carlstein! I will cashier him to-morrow. Confound his airs! I think I got out of it pretty well. To-night, on the whole, has been a night of triumph; but if I do not waltz with the little Dacre, I will only vote myself an Ovation. But see, here comes Sir Lucius. Well! how fares my brother Consul?"

"I do not like this rain. I have been hedging with Hounslow, having previously set Bag at his worthy sire with a little information. We shall have a perfect swamp, and then it will be strength against speed—the old story. Damn the St. Leger. I am sick of it."

"Pooh! pooh! think of the little Dacre!"

"Think of her, my dear fellow! I think of her too much. I should absolutely have diddled Hounslow, if it had not been for her confounded pretty face flitting about my stupid brain. I saw you speaking to Guardy. You managed that business well."

"Why, as I do all things, I flatter myself, Lucy. Do you know Lord St. Jerome?"

"Verbally. We have exchanged monosyllables,—but he is of the other set."

"He is cursedly familiar with the little Dacre. As the friend of her father, I think I shall interfere. Is there anything in it, think you?"

"Oh! no; she is engaged to another."

"Engaged!" said the Duke, absolutely turning pale.

"Do you remember a Dacre at Eton?"

"A Dacre at Eton!" mused the Duke. At another time it would not have been in his power to have recalled the stranger to his memory; but this evening the train of association had been laid, and after struggling a moment with his mind, he had the man. "To be sure, I do: Arundel Dacre—an odd sort of a fellow; but he was my senior."

"Well, that is the man—a nephew of Guardy, and cousin, of

course, to La Bellissima. He inherits, you know, all the property. She will not have a sou; but old Dacre, as you call him, has managed pretty well, and Monsieur Arundel is to compensate for the entail by presenting him with a grandson."

"The deuce!"

"The deuce, indeed! Often have I broken his head. Would that I had to a little more purpose!"

"Let us do it now!"

"He is not here, otherwise——One dislikes a spooney to be successful."

"Where are our friends?"

"Annesley with the Duchess, and Squib with the Duke at Ecarté."

"Success attend them both!"

"Amen!"

CHAPTER IV.

To feel that the possessions of an illustrious ancestry are about to slide from out your line for ever; that the numerous tenantry, who look up to you with the confiding eye that the most liberal parvenu cannot attract, will not count you among their lords; that the proud park, filled with the ancient and toppling trees that your fathers planted, will yield neither its glory nor its treasures to your seed, and that the old gallery, whose walls are hung with pictures more cherished than the collections of kings, will not breathe with your long posterity—all these are feelings very sad and very trying, and are among those daily pangs which moralists have forgotten in their catalogue of miseries, but which do not the less wear out those heart-strings, at which they are so constantly tugging.

This was the situation of Mr. Dacre. The whole of his large property was entailed, and descended to his nephew, who was a Protestant; and yet when he looked upon the blooming face of his enchanting daughter, he blessed the Providence, which, after all his visitations, had doomed him to be the sire of a thing so lovely.

An exile from her country at an early age, the education of May Dacre had been completed in a foreign land; yet the mingling bloods of Dacre and of Howard would not in a moment have permitted her to forget

"The inviolate island of the sage and free!"

even if the unceasing and ever-watchful exertions of her father had been wanting to make her worthy of so illustrious an ancestry.

But this, happily, was not the case; and to aid the development of the infant mind of his young child, to pour forth to her, as she grew in years and in reason, all the fruits of his own richly-cultivated intellect, was the solitary consolation of one, over whose conscious head was impending the most awful of visitations. May Dacre was gifted with a mind which, even if her tutor had not been her father, would have rendered tuition a delight. Her lively imagination, which early unfolded itself; her dangerous yet interesting vivacity; the keen delight, the swift enthusiasm with which she drank in knowledge, and then panted for more; her shrewd acuteness, and her innate passion for the excellent and the beautiful, filled her father with rapture which he repressed, and made him feel conscious how much there was to check, to guide, and to form, as well as to cherish, to admire, and to applaud.

As she grew up, the bright parts of her character shone with increased lustre; but, in spite of the exertions of her instructor, some less admirable qualities had not yet disappeared. She was still too often the dupe of her imagination, and though perfectly inexperienced, her confidence in her theoretical knowledge of human nature was unbounded. She had an idea, that she could penetrate the characters of individuals at a first meeting; and the consequence of this fatal axiom was, that she was always the slave of first impressions, and constantly the victim of prejudice. She was ever thinking individuals better or worse than they really were; and she believed it to be out of the power of any one to deceive her. Constant attendance during many years on a dying and beloved mother, and her deeply religious feelings, had first broken, and then controlled, a spirit which nature had intended to be arrogant and haughty. Her father she adored; and she seemed to devote to him all that consideration which, with more common characters, is generally distributed among their acquaintance.

We hint at her faults. How shall we describe her virtues? Her unbounded generosity—her dignified simplicity—her graceful frankness—her true nobility of thought and feeling—her firmness—her courage and her truth—her kindness to her inferiors—her constant charity—her devotion to her parents—her sympathy with sorrow—her detestation of oppression—her pure unsullied thoughts—her delicate taste—her deep religion. All these combined would have formed a delightful character, even if unaccompanied with such brilliant talents and such brilliant beauty. Accustomed from an early age to the converse of courts, and the forms of the most polished circles, her manner became her blood, her beauty, and

her mind. Yet she rather acted in unison with the spirit of society, than obeyed its minutest decree. She violated etiquette with a wilful grace, which made the outrage a precedent, and she mingled with princes without feeling her inferiority. Nature, and art, and fortune were the graces which had combined to form this girl. She was a jewel set in gold, and worn by a king.

Her creed had made her, in ancient Christendom, feel less an alien; but when she returned to that native country which she had never forgotten, she found that creed her degradation. Her indignant spirit clung with renewed ardour to the crushed altars of her faith; and not before those proud shrines where cardinals officiate, and a thousand acolytes fling their censers, had she bowed with half the abandonment of spirit with which she invoked the Virgin in her oratory at Dacre.

The recent death of her mother rendered Mr. Dacre and herself little inclined to enter society; and as they were both desirous of residing on that estate from which they had been so long and so unwillingly absent, they had not yet visited London. The greater part of their time had been passed chiefly in communication with those great Catholic families with whom the Dacres were allied, and to which they belonged. The modern race of the Howards, and the Cliffords, the Talbots, the Arundels, and the Jerninghams, were not unworthy of their proud progenitors. Miss Dacre observed with respect, and assuredly with sympathy, the mild dignity, the noble patience, the proud humility, the calm hope, the uncompromising courage, with which her father and his friends sustained their oppression, and lived, as proscribed, in the realm which they had created. Yet her lively fancy and gay spirit found less to admire in the feelings which influenced these families in their intercourse with the world, which induced them to foster but slight intimacies out of the pale of the proscribed, and which tinged their domestic life with that formal and gloomy colouring which ever accompanies a monotonous existence. Her disposition told her, that all this affected non-interference with the business of society might be politic, but assuredly was not pleasant; her quick sense whispered to her it was unwise, and that it retarded, not advanced, the great result in which her sanguine temper dared often to indulge. Under any circumstances, it did not appear to her to be wisdom to second the efforts of their oppressors for their degradation or their misery, and to seek no consolation in the amiable feelings of their fellow-creatures, for the stern rigour of their unsocial government. But, independently of all general principles, Miss Dacre could not but believe that it was the duty of the Catholic gentry to mix more with that world which so misconceived their spirit. Proud in her conscious knowledge of their

exalted virtues, she felt that they had only to be known to be recognised as the worthy leaders of that nation which they had so often saved, and never betrayed.

She did not conceal her opinions from the circle in which they had grown up. All the young members were her disciples, and were decidedly of opinion, that if the House of Lords would but listen to May Dacre, emancipation would be a settled thing. Her logic would have destroyed Lord Liverpool's arguments—her wit, extinguished Lord Eldon's jokes. But the elder members only shed a solemn smile, and blessed May Dacre's shining eyes and sanguine spirit.

Her greatest supporter was Mrs. Dallington Vere. This lady was a distant relation of Mr. Dacre. At seventeen, she, herself a Catholic, had married Mr. Dallington Vere, of Dallington House, a Catholic gentleman of considerable fortune, whose age resembled his wealth. No sooner had this incident taken place, than did Mrs. Dallington Vere hurry to London, and soon evinced a most laudable determination to console herself for her husband's political disabilities. Mrs. Dallington Vere went to Court; and Mrs. Dallington Vere gave suppers after the Opera, and concerts which, in number and brilliancy, were only equalled by her balls. The Dandies patronised her, and selected her for their Muse. The Duke of Shropshire betted on her always at Ecarté; and, to crown the whole affair, she made Mr. Dallington Vere lay claim to a dormant peerage. The women were all pique—the *men* all patronage. A Protestant Minister was alarmed; and Lord Squib supposed that Mrs. Dallington must be the Scarlet Lady of which they had heard so often.

Season after season, she kept up the ball; and although, of course, she no longer made an equal sensation, she was not less brilliant, nor her position less eminent. She had got into the best set, and was more quiet, like a patriot in place. Never was there a gayer lady than Mrs. Dallington Vere, but never a more prudent one. Her virtue was only equalled by her discretion; but as the odds were equal, Lord Squib betted on the last. People sometimes indeed did say—they always will—but what is talk? Mere breath. And reputation is marble, and iron, and sometimes brass; and so, you see, talk has no chance.—They did say, that Sir Lucius Grafton was about to enter into the Romish communion; but then it turned out that it was only to get a divorce from his wife, on the plea that she was a heretic. The fact was, Mrs. Dallington Vere was a most successful woman, lucky in everything, lucky even in her husband—for he died. He did not only die—he left his whole fortune to his wife. Some said that his relations were going to set aside the will, on the plea that it was written

with a crow-quill on pink paper; but this was false—it was only a codicil.

All eyes were on a very pretty woman, with fifteen thousand a-year, and only twenty-three. The Duke of Shropshire wished he was disembarrassed. Such a player of Ecarté might double her income. Lord Raff advanced, trusting to his beard, and young Amadée de Rouerie mortgaged his dressing-case, and came post from Paris; but in spite of his sky-blue nether garments and his Hessians, he followed my Lord's example, and re-crossed the water. It is even said that Lord Squib was sentimental; but this must have been the malice of Charles Annesley.

All, however, failed. The truth is, Mrs. Dallington Vere had nothing to gain by re-entering Paradise, which matrimony, of course, is; and so she determined to remain mistress of herself. She had gained fashion, and fortune, and rank; she was young, and she was pretty. She thought it might be possible for a discreet experienced little lady to lead a very pleasant life, without being assisted in her expenses, or disturbed in her diversion, by a gentleman who called himself her husband, occasionally asked her how she slept in a bed which he did not share, or munificently presented her with a necklace purchased with her own money. Discreet Mrs. Dallington Vere!

She had been absent from London during the past season, having taken it also into her head to travel. She was equally admired and equally plotted for at Rome, at Paris, and at Vienna, as at London; but the bird had not been caught, and, flying away, left many a despairing Prince and amorous Count to muse over their lean visages and meagre incomes.

Dallington House made its fair mistress a neighbour of her relations, the Dacres. No one could be a more fascinating companion than Mrs. Dallington Vere. May Dacre read her character at once, and these ladies became great allies. She was to assist Miss Dacre in her plans for rousing their Catholic friends, as no one was better qualified to be her adjutant. Already they had commenced their operations, and balls at Dallington and Dacre, frequent, splendid, and various, had already made the Catholic houses the most eminent in the Riding, and their brilliant mistresses the heroines of all the youth.

CHAPTER V.

It rained all night without ceasing: yet the morrow was serene. Nevertheless the odds had shifted. On the evening, they had not been more than two to one against the first favourite, the Duke of St. James' *ch. c. Sanspareil*, by *Ne plus Ultra;* while they were five to one against the second favourite, Mr. Dash's *gr. c. the Dandy*, by *Banker*, and nine and ten to one against the next in favour. This morning, however, affairs were altered. Mr. Dash and his Dandy were at the head of the poll; and as the owner rode his own horse, being a jockey and a fit rival for the Duke of St. James, his backers were sanguine. *Sanspareil* was, however, the second favourite.

The Duke, however, was confident as an universal conqueror, and came on in his usual state,—rode round the course,—inspirited Lady Aphrodite, who was all anxiety,—betted with Miss Dacre, and bowed to Mrs Dallington.

There were more than ninety horses, and yet the start was fair. But the result? Pardon me! The fatal remembrance overpowers my pen. An effort and some *Eau de Portingale*, and I shall recover. The first favourite was never heard of, the second favourite was never seen after the distance post, all the ten-to-oners were in the rear, and a *dark* horse, which had never been thought of, and which the careless St. James had never even observed in the list, rushed past the grand stand in sweeping triumph. The spectators were almost too surprised to cheer; but when the name of the winner was detected, there was a deafening shout, particularly from the Yorkshiremen. The victor was the Earl of St. Jerome's *b. f. May Dacre*, by *Howard*.

Conceive the confusion! *Sanspareil* was at last discovered, and immediately shipped off for Newmarket, as young gentlemen, who get into scrapes, are sent to travel. The Dukes of Burlington and Shropshire exchanged a few hundreds. The Duchess and Charles Annesley, a few gloves. The consummate Lord Bloomerly, though a backer of the favourite, in compliment to his host, contrived to receive from all parties, and particularly from St. Maurice. The sweet little Wrekins were absolutely ruined. Sir Lucius looked blue, but he had hedged; and Lord Squib looked yellow, but some doubted. Lord Hounslow was done, and Lord Bagshot was diddled.

The Duke of St. James was perhaps the heaviest sufferer on the field, and certainly bore his losses the best. Had he seen the five-and-twenty thousand he was *minus* counted before him, he probably would have been staggered; but as it was, another crumb of

his half million was gone. The loss existed only in idea. It was really too trifling to think of, and he galloped up to Miss Dacre, and was among the warmest of her congratulators.

"I would offer your Grace my sympathy for your congratulations," said Miss Dacre in a rather amiable tone, "but"—and here she resumed her air of mockery,—"you are too great a man to be affected by so light a casualty. And now that I recollect myself, did you run a horse?"

"Why—no; the fault was, I believe, that he would not run; but *Sanspareil* is as great a hero as ever. He has only been conquered by the elements."

The dinner at the Duke of St. James' was this day more splendid even than the preceding. He was determined to show that the disappointment had produced no effect upon the temper of so imperial a personage as himself, and he invited several of the leading gentry to join his coterie. The Dacres were among the solicited; but they were, during the races, the guests of Mrs. Dallington Vere, whose seat was only a mile off, and therefore were unobtainable.

Blazed the plate, sparkled the wine, and the aromatic venison sent forth its odorous incense to the skies. The favourite cook had done wonders, though a *Sanspareil Paté*, on which he had been meditating for a week, was obliged to be suppressed, and was sent up as a *Tourte à la Bourbon*, in compliment to his Royal Highness. It was a delightful party:—all the stiffness of metropolitan society disappeared. All talked, and laughed, and ate, and drank; and the Protocolis and the French Princes, who were most active members of a banquet, ceased sometimes, from want of breath, to moralize on the English character. The little Wrekins, with their well-acted lamentations over their losses, were capital; and Sophy nearly smiled and chattered her head this day into the reversion of the coronet of Fitz-pompey. May she succeed! For a wilder little partridge never yet flew. Caroline St. Maurice alone was sad, and would not be comforted; although St. James, observing her gloom, and guessing at its cause, had in private assured her that, far from losing, on the whole he was perhaps even a winner.

None, however, talked more agreeable nonsense, and made a more elegant uproar, than the Duke of St. James.

"These young men," whispered Lord Squib to Annesley, "do not know the value of money. We must teach *it* them. I know too well—I find it very dear."

If the old physicians are correct in considering from twenty-five to thirty-five as the period of lusty youth, Lord Squib was still a lusty youth, though a very corpulent one indeed. The Carnival of

his life, however, was nearly over, and probably the termination of the race-week might hail him a man. He was the best fellow in the world; short and sleek, half bald, and looked fifty; with a waist, however, which had not yet vanished, and where Art successfully controlled rebellious Nature, like the Austrians the Lombards. If he were not exactly a wit, he was still, however, full of unaffected fun, and threw out the results of a roué life with considerable ease and point. He had inherited a very fair and peerlike property, which he had contrived to embarrass in so complicated and extraordinary a manner, that he had been a ruined man for years, and yet lived well on an income allowed him by his creditors to manage his estate for their benefit. The joke was, he really managed it very well. It was his hobby, and he prided himself, especially, upon his character as a man of business.

The banquet is certainly the best preparative for the ball, if its blessings be not abused, and then you get heavy. Your true votary of Terpsichore, and of him we only speak, requires, particularly in a land of easterly winds, which cut into his cab-head at every turn of every street, some previous process to make his blood set him an example in dancing. It is strong Burgundy, and his sparkling sister Champagne, that make a race-ball always so amusing a divertissement. One enters the room with a gay elation, which defies rule without violating etiquette, and in these county meetings, there is a variety of character, and classes, and manners, which are highly interesting, and afford an agreeable contrast to those more brilliant and refined assemblies, the members of which, being educated by exactly the same system, and with exactly the same ideas, think, look, move, talk, dress, and even eat, alike—the only remarkable personage being a woman somewhat more beautiful than the beauties who surround her, and a man rather more original in his affectations than the puppies that surround him. The proof of the general dulness of polite circles is the great sensation that is always produced by a new face. The season always commences briskly, because there are so many. Ball, and dinner, and concert, collect then plentiful votaries; but as we move on, the dulness will develope itself, and then come the morning breakfast, and the water party, and the *fête champêtre*, all desperate attempts to produce variety with old materials, and to occasion a second effect by a cause which is already exhausted.

These philosophical remarks precede another introduction to the public ball-room at Doncaster. Mrs. Dallington Vere and Miss Dacre are walking, arm in arm, at the upper end of the room.

"You are disappointed, love, about Arundel?" said Mrs. Dallington.

"Bitterly; I never counted on any event more certainly than on his return this summer."

"And why tarrieth the wanderer—unwillingly of course?"

"Lord Darrell, who was to have gone over as *Chargé d'affaires*, has announced to his father the impossibility of his becoming a diplomatist, so our poor *attaché* suffers, and is obliged to bear the *portefeuille ad interim*."

"Does your cousin like Vienna?"

"Not at all. He is a regular John Bull; and if I am to judge from his correspondence, he will make an excellent ambassador, in one sense, for I think his fidelity and his patriotism may be depended on. We seldom serve those whom we do not love; and if I am to believe Arundel, there is neither a person nor a place on the whole Continent that affords him the least satisfaction."

"How singular, then, that he should have fixed on such a *métier*; but I suppose, like other young men, his friends fixed for him?"

"Not at all. No step could be less pleasing to my father, than his leaving England; but Arundel is quite unmanageable, even by Papa. He is the oddest but the dearest person in the world!"

"He is very clever, is he not?"

"I think so. I have no doubt he will distinguish himself, whatever career he runs; but he is so extremely singular in his manner, that I do not think his general reputation harmonises with my private opinion."

"And will his visit to England be a long one?"

"I hope that it will be a permanent one. I, you know, am his confidante, and entrusted with all his plans. If I succeed in arranging something according to his wishes, I hope that he will not again quit us."

"I pray you may, sweet! and wish, love, for your sake, that he would enter the room this moment."

"This is the most successful meeting, I should think, that ever was known at Doncaster," said Miss Dacre. "We are, at least, indebted to the Duke of St. James for a very agreeable party, to say nothing of all the gloves we have won."

"How do you like the Duke of Burlington?"

"Very much. There is a calm courtliness about him which I think very imposing. He is the only man I ever saw, who, without being very young, was not an unfit companion for youth. And there is no affectation of juvenility about him. He involuntarily reminds you of youth, as an empty orchestra does of music."

"I shall tell him this. He is already your devoted; and I have no doubt that, inspired at the same time by your universal charms,

and our universal hints, I shall soon hail you Duchess of Burlington. Don Arundel will repent his diplomacy."

"I thought I was to be another Duchess this morning."

"You deserve to be a triple one. But dream not of the unhappy patron of *Sanspareil*. There is something in his eyes which tells me he is *not* a marrying man."

There was a momentary pause, and Miss Dacre spoke.

"I like his brother steward very much, Bertha. Sir Lucius is very witty and very candid. It is an agreeable thing to see a man, who has been so gay, and who has had so many temptations to be gay, turn into a regular domestic character, without losing any of those qualities which made him an ornament to society. When men of the world terminate their career as prudently as Sir Lucius, I observe that they are always amusing companions, because they are perfectly unaffected."

"No one is more unaffected than Lucius Grafton. I am quite happy to find you like him; for he is an old friend of mine, and I know that he has a good heart."

"I like him especially, because he likes you."

"Dearest!"

"He introduced me to Lady Afy. I perceive that she is very attached to her husband."

"Lady Afy is a charming woman. I know no woman so truly elegant as Lady Afy. The young Duke, you know, they say, greatly admires Lady Afy."

"Oh! does he? Well now, I should have thought her rather a sentimental and serious donna—one very unlikely——"

"Hush! here come two cavaliers."

The Dukes of Burlington and St. James advanced.

"We are attracted by observing two nymphs wandering in this desert," said his Grace of Burlington. This was the Burgundy.

"And we wish to know whether there be any dragon to destroy, any ogre to devour, any magician to massacre, or how, when, and where, we can testify our devotion to the ladies of our love," added his Grace of St. James. This was the Champagne.

"The age of chivalry is past," said Miss Dacre. "Bores have succeeded to dragons, and I have shivered too many lances in vain, ever to hope for their extirpation; and as for enchantments——"

"They depend only upon yourself," gallantly interrupted the Duke of Burgundy. Psha!—Burlington.

"Our spells are dissolved, our wands are sunk five fathom deep; we had retired to this solitude, and we were moralising," said Mrs. Dallington Vere.

"Then you were doing an extremely useless, and not very mag-

nanimous thing," said the Duke of St. James; "for to moralise in a desert is no great exertion of philosophy. You should moralise in a drawing-room; and so let me propose our return to that world which must long have missed us. Let us do something to astound these elegant barbarians. Look at that young gentleman: how stiff he is! A Yorkshire Apollo! Look at that old lady: how elaborately she simpers! The Venus of the Riding! They absolutely attempt to flirt. Let us give them a gallop!"

He was advancing to salute this provincial couple; but his more matured companion repressed him.

"Ah! I forgot," said the young Duke. "I am Yorkshire. If I were a western like yourself, I might compromise my character. Your Grace monopolises the fun."

"I think your Grace may safely attack them," said Miss Dacre. "I do not think you will be recognised. People entertain, in this barbarous country, such vulgar, old-fashioned notions of a Duke of St. James, that I have not the least doubt your Grace might have a good deal of fun without being found out."

"There is no necessity," said his Grace, "to fly from Miss Dacre for amusement. By-the-bye, you made a very good repartee. You must permit me to introduce you to my friend, Lord Squib. I am sure you would agree so."

"I have been introduced to Lord Squib."

"And you found him most amusing? Did he say anything which vindicates my appointment of him as my court-jester?"

"I found him very modest. He endeavoured to excuse his errors, by being your companion: and to prove his virtues by being mine."

"Treacherous Squib! I positively must call him out. Duke, bear him a cartel."

"The quarrel is ours, and must be decided here," said Mrs. Dallington Vere. "I second Miss Dacre."

"We are in the way of some good people here, I think," said the Duke of Burlington, who, though the most dignified, was the most considerate of men; "at least, here are a stray couple, or two, staring as if they wished us to understand we prevented a set"

"Let them stare," said the Duke of St. James; "we were made to be looked at. 'Tis our vocation, Hal, and they are gifted with vision purposely to behold us."

"Your Grace," said Miss Dacre, "reminds me of my old friend Prince Rubarini, who told me one day, that when he got up late, he always gave orders to have the sun put back a couple of hours."

"And you, Miss Dacre, remind me of my old friend, the Duchess

of Nevers, who told me one day, that in the course of her experience, she had only met one man who was her rival in repartee."

"And that man?" asked Mrs. Vere.

"Was your slave, Mrs. Dallington," said the young Duke, bowing profoundly, with his hand on his heart.

"I remember she said the same thing to me," said the Duke of Burlington, "about ten years before."

"That was her grandmother, Burley," said the Duke of St. James.

"Her grandmother!" said Mrs. Dallington, exciting the contest.

"Decidedly," said the young Duke. "I remember my friend always spoke of the Duke of Burlington as grandpapa."

"You will profit, I have no doubt, then, by the company of so venerable a friend," said Miss Dacre.

"Why," said the young Duke, "I am not a believer in the perfectibility of the species; and you know, that when we come to a certain point——"

"We must despair of improvement," said the Duke of Burlington.

"Your Grace came forward, like a true knight, to my rescue," said Miss Dacre, bowing to the Duke of Burlington.

"Beauty can inspire miracles," said the Duke of St. James.

"This young gentleman has been spoiled by travel, Miss Dacre," said the Duke of Burlington. "You have much to answer for, for he tells every one that you were his guardian."

The eyes of Miss Dacre and the Duke of St. James met. His Grace bowed with that graceful impudence, which is, after all, the best explanation for every possible misunderstanding.

"I always heard that the Duke of St. James was born of age," said Miss Dacre.

"The report was very rife on the Continent when I travelled," said Mrs. Dallington Vere.

"That was only a poetical allegory, which veiled the precocious results of my fair tutor's exertions."

"How very discreet he is!" said the Duke of Burlington. "You may tell immediately that he is two-and-forty."

"We are neither of us, though, off the *pavé* yet, Burlington,—so what say you to inducing these inspiring muses to join the waltz, which is just now commencing?"

The young Duke offered his hand to Miss Dacre, and followed by their companions, they were in a few minutes lost in the waves of the waltzers.

CHAPTER VI.

THE gaieties of the race-week closed with a ball at Dallington House. As the pretty mistress of this proud mansion was acquainted with all the members of the ducal party, our hero and his noble band were among those who honoured it with their presence.

We really have had so many balls both in this and other as immortal works, that, in a literary point of view, we think we must give up dancing; nor would we have introduced you to Dallington House, if there had been no more serious business on hand than a flirtation with a lady or a lobster salad. Ah! why is not a little brief communion with the last as innocent as with the first!

Small feet are flitting in the mazy dance, and music winds with inspiring harmony through halls, whose lofty mirrors multiply beauty, and add fresh lustre to the blazing lamps. May Dacre there is wandering like a peri in Paradise, and Lady Aphrodite is glancing with her dazzling brow, yet an Asmodeus might detect an occasional gloom over her radiant face. It is but for an instant, yet it thrills. She looks like some favoured sultana, who muses for a moment amid her splendour on her early love.

And she, the sparkling mistress of this scene—say, where is she? Not among the dancers, though a more graceful form you would scarcely look upon; not even among her guests, though a more accomplished hostess it would be hard to find. Gaiety pours forth its flood, and all are thinking of themselves, or of some one sweeter even than self-consciousness, or else perhaps one absent might be missed.

Leaning on the arm of Sir Lucius Grafton, and shrouded in her cashmere, Mrs. Dallington Vere paces the terrace in earnest conversation.

"If I fail in this," said Sir Lucius, "I shall be desperate. Fortune seems to have sent him for the very purpose. Think only of the state of affairs for a moment. After a thousand plots on my part—after having for the last two years never ceased my exertions to make her commit herself, when neither a love of pleasure, nor a love of revenge, nor the thoughtlessness to which women in her situation generally have recourse, produced the slightest effect—this stripling starts upon the stage, and in a moment the iceberg melts. Oh! I never shall forget the rapture of the moment when the faithful Lachen announced the miracle!"

"But why not let the adventure take the usual course? You have your evidence, or you can get it. Finish the business. These exposées, to be sure, are disagreeable enough; but to be the talk

of the town for a week is no great suffering. Go to Baden, drink the waters, and it will be forgotten. Surely, this is an inconvenience not to be weighed for a moment against the great result."

"Believe me, my dearest friend, Lucy Grafton cares very little about the babble of the million, provided it do not obstruct him in his objects. Would to Heaven I could proceed in the summary and effectual mode you point out! but that I much doubt. There is about Afy, in spite of all her softness and humility, a strange spirit, a cursed courage, or obstinacy, which sometimes has blazed out, when I have over-galled her, in a way half awful. I confess I dread her standing at bay. I am in her power, and a divorce she could successfully oppose, if I appeared to be the person who hastened the catastrophe, and she were piqued to show that she would not fall an easy victim. No, no! I have a surer, though a more difficult game. She is intoxicated with this boy. I will drive her into his arms."

"A probable result, forsooth! I do not think your genius, Baronet, has particularly brightened since we last met. I thought your letters were getting dull. You seem to forget, that there is a third person to be consulted in this adventure. And why, in the name of Doctors' Commons, the Duke is to close his career by marrying a woman of whom, with your leave, he is already, if experience be not a dream, half wearied, is really past my comprehension, although as Yorkshire, Lucy, I should not, you know, be the least apprehensive of mortals."

"I depend upon my unbounded influence over St. James."

"What! do you mean to recommend the step, then?"

"Hear me! At present I am his confidential counsellor on all subjects——"

"But one."

"Patience, fair dame—and I have hitherto imperceptibly, but efficiently, exerted my influence to prevent his getting entangled with any other nets."

"Faithful friend!"

"*Point de Moquerie!* Listen. I depend further upon his perfect inexperience of women,—for, in spite of his numerous gallantries, he has never yet had a grand passion, and is quite ignorant, even at this moment, how involved his feelings are with his mistress. He has not yet learnt the bitter lesson, that unless we despise a woman when we cease to love her, we are still a slave, without the consolement of intoxication. I depend further upon his strong feelings, for strong I perceive they are, with all his affectation, and on his weakness of character, which will allow him to be the dupe of his first great emotion. It is to prevent

that explosion from taking place under any other roof than my own, that I now require your advice and assistance,—that advice and assistance, which already have done so much for me. I like not this sudden and uncontemplated visit to Castle Dacre. I fear these Dacres—I fear the revulsion of his feelings. Above all, I fear that girl."

"But her cousin—is he not a talisman? She loves him."

"Pooh! a cousin! Is not the name an answer? She loves him, as she loves her pony, because he was her companion when she was a child, and kissed her when they gathered strawberries together. The pallid, moonlight passion of a cousin, and an absent one, too, has but a sorry chance against the blazing beams that shoot from the eyes of a new lover. Would to Heaven that I had not to go down to my boobies at Cleve! I should like nothing better than to amuse myself an autumn at Dallington with the little Dacre, and put an end to such an unnatural and irreligious connection. She is a splendid creature! Bring her to town next season."

"But to the point. You wish me, I imagine, to act the same part with the lady, as you have done with the gentleman. I am to step in, I suppose, as the confidential counsellor on all subjects of sweet May. I am to preserve her from a youth whose passions are so impetuous, and whose principles are so unformed."

"Admirable Bertha! You read my thoughts."

"But suppose I endanger, instead of advance your plans. Suppose, for instance, *I* captivate his Grace. As extraordinary things have happened, as you know. High place must be respected, and the coronet of a Duchess must not be despised."

"All considerations must yield to you, as do all men," said Sir Lucius, with ready gallantry, but not free from anxiety.

"No, no, there is no danger of that. I am not going to play traitress to my system, even for the Duke of St. James; therefore, anything that occurs between us shall be merely an incident *pour passer le temps seulement*, and to preserve our young friend from the little Dacre. I have no doubt he will behave very well, and that I shall send him safe to Cleve Park in a fortnight with a very good character. I would recommend you, however, not to encourage any unreasonable delay."

"Certainly not; but I must, of course, be guided by circumstances." Sir Lucius observed truly. There were other considerations besides getting rid of his spouse, which cemented his friendship with the young Duke. It will be curious, if lending a few thousands to the husband save our hero from the wife. There is no such thing as unmixed evil. A man who loses his money, gains, at least, experience, and sometimes something

better. But what the Duke of St. James gained is not yet to be told.

"And you like Lachen?" asked Mrs. Dallington.

"Very much."

"I formed her with great care, but you must keep her in good humour."

"That is not difficult. *Elle est très jolie;* and pretty women, like yourself, are always good-natured."

"But has she really worked herself into the confidence of the virtuous Aphrodite?"

"Entirely. And the humour is, that Lachen has persuaded her, that Lachen herself is on the best possible terms with my confidential valet, and can make herself at all times mistress of her master's secrets. So it is always in my power, apparently without taking the slightest interest in Afy's conduct, to regulate it as I will. At present, she believes that my affairs are in a very distracted state, and that I intend to reside solely on the Continent, and to bear her off from her Cupidon. This thought haunts her rest, and hangs heavy on her waking mind. I think it will do the business."

"We have been too long absent. Let us return."

"I accompany you, my charming friend. What should I do without such an ally? I only wish that I could assist you in a manner equally friendly. Is there no obdurate hero who wants a confidential adviser to dilate upon your charms, or to counsel him to throw himself at your feet; or are that beautiful face and lovely form, as they must always be, invincible?"

"I assure you quite disembarrassed of any attentions whatever. But I suppose, when I return to Athens, I must get Platonic again."

"Let me be the philosopher!"

"No, no; we know each other too well. I have been free ever since that fatal affair of young Darrell, and travel has restored my spirits a little. They say, his brother is just as handsome. He was expected at Vienna, but I could not meet him, although I suppose, as I made him a Viscount, I am rather popular than not with him."

"Pooh! pooh! think not of this. No one blames you. You are still a universal favourite. But I would recommend you nevertheless to take me as your cavalier."

"You are too generous, or too bold. No, man! I am tired of flirtation, and really think, for variety sake, I must fall in love. After all, there is nothing like the delicious dream, though it be but a dream.—Spite of my discretion, I sometimes tremble lest I should end by making myself a fool—with some grand passion.—

You look serious. Fear not for the young Duke. He is a dazzling gentleman, but not a hero exactly to my taste."

CHAPTER VII.

THE moment that was to dissolve the spell which had combined and enchanted so many thousands of human beings, arrived. Nobles and nobodys, beauties and blacklegs, dispersed in all directions. The Duke of Burlington carried off the French Princes and the Protocolis, the Bloomerlys and the Vaticans, to his Paradise of Marringworth. The Fitz-pompeys cantered off with the Shropshires—omen of felicity to the enamoured St. Maurice—and the enamouring Sophy. Annesley and Squib return to their *patés*. Sir Lucius and Lady Aphrodite, neither of them with tempers like summer skies, betook their way to Cambridgeshire, like Adam and Eve from the glorious garden. The Duke of St. James, after a hurried visit to London, found himself, at the beginning of October, on his way to Dacre.

As his carriage rolled on, he revelled in delicious fancies. The young Duke built castles not only at Hauteville, but in less substantial regions. Reverie, in the flush of our warm youth, generally indulges in the future. We are always anticipating the next adventure, and clothe the coming heroine with a rosy tint. When we advance a little on our limited journey, and an act or two of the comedy, the gayest in all probability, are over, the wizard Memory dethrones the witch Imagination, and 'tis the past on which the mind feeds in its musings. 'Tis then we ponder on each great result, which has stolen on us without the labour of reflection; 'tis then we analyse emotions which, at the time, we could not comprehend, and probe the action which Passion inspired, and which Prejudice has hitherto defended. Alas! who can strike these occasional balances in Life's great ledger without a sigh! Alas! how little do they promise in favour of the great account! What whisperings of final bankruptcy! what a damnable consciousness of present insolvency! My friends! what a blunder is youth! Ah! why does Truth light her torch, but to illume the ruined temple of our existence! Ah! why do we know we are men, only to be conscious of our exhausted energies!

And yet there is a pleasure in a deal of judgment, which your judicious man alone can understand. It is agreeable to see some younkers falling into the same traps which have broken our own shins; and, shipwrecked on the island of our hopes, one likes to

mark a vessel go down full in sight. 'Tis demonstration that we are not branded as Cains among the favoured race of man. Then giving advice—that *is* delicious, and perhaps repays one all. It is a privilege your grey-haired Signors solely can enjoy; but young men now-a-days may make some claim to it. And, after all, experience is a thing that all men praise. Bards sing its glories, and proud Philosophy has long elected it her favourite child. 'Tis the τὸ καλὸν, in spite of all its ugliness, and the elixir vitæ, though we generally gain it with a shattered pulse.

No more! no more! it is a bitter cheat, the consolation of blunderers, the last refuge of expiring hopes, the forlorn battalion that is to capture the citadel of Happiness—yet, yet impregnable! Oh! what is Wisdom, and what is Virtue, without youth! Talk not to me of knowledge of mankind;—give, give me back the sunshine of the breast which they o'erclouded! Talk not to me of proud morality—oh! give me innocence!

Amid the ruins of eternal Rome, I scribble pages lighter than the wind, and feed with fancies volumes which will be forgotten, ere I can hear that they are even published. Yet am I not one insensible to the magic of my memorable abode, and I could pour my passion o'er the land; but I repress my thoughts, and beat their tide back to their hollow caves!

The ocean of my mind is calm, but dim, and ominous of storms that may arise. A cloud hangs heavy o'er the horizon's verge, and veils the future. Even now, a star appears, steals into light, and now again 'tis gone! I hear the proud swell of the growing waters,—I hear the whispering of the wakening winds; but Reason lays her trident on the cresting waves, and all again is hushed.

For I am one, though young, yet old enough to know, Ambition is a demon; and I fly from what I fear. And Fame has eagle wings, and yet she mounts not so high as man's desires. When all is gained, how little then is won! And yet to gain that little, how much is lost! Let us once aspire, and madness follows. Could we but drag the purple from the hero's heart; could we but tear the laurel from the poet's throbbing brain, and read their doubts, their dangers, their despair, we might learn a greater lesson than we shall ever acquire by musing over their exploits or their inspiration. Think of unrecognised Cæsar, with his wasting youth, weeping over the Macedonian's young career! Could Pharsalia compensate for those withering pangs? View the obscure Napoleon starving in the streets of Paris! What was St. Helena to the bitterness of such existence? The visions of past glory might illumine even that dark imprisonment; but to be conscious that his supernatural energies might die away without

creating their miracles: can the wheel, or the rack, rival the torture of such a suspicion? Lo! Byron bending o'er his shattered lyre, with inspiration in his very rage. And the pert taunt could sting even this child of light! To doubt of the truth of the creed in which you have been nurtured, is not so terrific as to doubt respecting the intellectual vigour on whose strength you have staked your happiness. Yet these were mighty ones; perhaps the records of the world will not yield us three score to be their mates. Then tremble, ye whose cheek glows too warmly at their names! Who would be more than man, should fear lest he be less.

Yet there is hope—there should be happiness—for them—for all. Kind Nature, ever mild, extends her fond arms to her truant children, and breathes her words of solace. As we weep on her indulgent and maternal breast, the exhausted passions, one by one, expire like gladiators in yon huge pile, that has made barbarity sublime. Yes! there is hope and joy—and it is here!

Where the breeze wanders through a perfumed sky, and where the beautiful sun illumines beauty. On the poet's farm and on the conqueror's arch, thy beam is lingering! It lingers on the shattered porticoes that once shrouded, from thy o'erpowering glory, the lords of earth; it lingers upon the ruined temples that, even in their desolation, are yet sacred! 'Tis gone, as if in sorrow! Yet the woody lake still blushes with thy warm kiss; and still thy rosy light tinges the pine that breaks the farthest heaven!

A heaven all light, all beauty, and all love! What marvel men should worship in these climes? And lo! a small and single cloud is sailing in the immaculate ether, burnished with twilight, like an Olympian chariot from above, with the fair vision of some graceful God!

It is the hour that poets love; but I crush thoughts that rise from out my mind, like nymphs from out their caves, when sets the sun. Yes, 'tis a blessing here to breathe and muse. And cold his clay, indeed, who does not yield to thy Ausonian beauty! Clime where the heart softens, and the mind expands! Region of mellowed bliss! O, most enchanting land!

But we are at the park gates.

They whirled along through a park which would have contained half a hundred of those Patagonian paddocks of modern times, which have usurped the name. At length, the young Duke was roused from his reverie by Carlstein, proud of his previous knowledge, leaning over and announcing—

"Chateau de Dacre, your Grace!"

The Duke looked up. The sun, which had already set, had

tinged with a dying crimson the eastern sky, against which rose a princely edifice. Castle Dacre was the erection of Vanbrugh, an imaginative artist, whose critics we wish no bitterer fate, than not to live in his splendid creations. A spacious centre, richly ornamented, though broken, perhaps, into rather too much detail, was joined to wings of a corresponding magnificence, by fanciful colonnades. A terrace, extending the whole front, was covered with orange trees, and many a statue, and many an obelisk, and many a temple, and many a fountain, were tinted with the warm twilight. The Duke did not view the forgotten scene of youth without emotion. It was a palace worthy of the heroine on whom he had been musing. The carriage gained the lofty portal. Luigi and Spiridion, who had preceded their master, were ready to receive the Duke, who was immediately ushered to the rooms prepared for his reception. He was later than he had intended, and no time was to be unnecessarily lost in his preparation for his appearance.

His Grace's toilet was already prepared: the magical dressing-box had been unpacked, and the shrine for his devotions was covered with richly-cut bottles of all sizes, arranged in all the elegant combinations which the picturesque fancy of his valet could devise, adroitly intermixed with the golden instruments, the china vases, and the ivory and rosewood brushes, which were worthy even of Delcroix' exquisite inventions.

The Duke of St. James was master of the art of dress, and consequently consummated that paramount operation with the decisive rapidity of one whose principles are settled. He was cognisant of all effects, could calculate in a second all consequences, and obtained his result with that promptitude and precision which stamp the great artist. For a moment, he was plunged in profound abstraction, and at the same time stretched his legs after his drive. He then gave his orders, with the decision of Wellington on the arrival of the Prussians, and the battle began.

His Grace had a taste for magnificence in costume; but he was handsome, young, and a duke. Pardon him. Yet to-day he was, on the whole, simple. Confident in a complexion whose pellucid lustre had not yielded to a season of dissipation, his Grace did not dread the want of relief which a white face, a white cravat, and a white waistcoat, would seem to imply.

A hair chain set in diamonds, worn in memory of the absent Aphrodite, and to pique the present Dacre, is annexed to a glass, which reposes in the waistcoat pocket. This was the only weight that the Duke of St. James ever carried. It was a bore, but it was indispensable.

It is done. He stops one moment before the long pier-glass, and shoots a glance which would have read the mind of Talleyrand. It will do. He assumes the look, the air that befit the occasion: cordial, but dignified; sublime, but sweet. He descends like a deity from Olympus to a banquet of illustrious mortals.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Dacre received him with marked affection: his daughter, with a cordiality which he had never yet experienced from her. Though more simply dressed than when she first met his ardent gaze, her costume again charmed his practised eye. "It must be her shape," thought the young Duke—"it is magical!"

The rooms were full of various guests, and some of these were presented to his Grace, who was, of course, an object of universal notice, but particularly by those persons who pretended not to be aware of his entrance. The party assembled at Castle Dacre consisted of some thirty or forty persons, all of great consideration, but of a different character from any with whom the Duke of St. James had been acquainted during his short experience of English society. They were not what are called *fashionable* people. We have no princes and no ambassadors, no duke who is a gourmand, no earl who is a jockey, no manœuvring mothers, no flirting daughters, no gambling sons, for your entertainment. There is no superfine gentleman brought down specially from town to gauge the refinement of the manners of the party, and to prevent them, by his constant supervision and occasional sneer, from losing any of the beneficial results of their last campaign. We shall sadly want, too, a Lady Patroness to issue a decree, or quote her code of consolidated etiquette. We are not sure that Almack's will ever be mentioned: quite sure that Maradan has never yet been heard of. The Jockey Club may be quoted, but Crockford will be a dead letter. As for the rest, Boodle's is all we can promise,—miserable consolation for the bow window. As for buffoons and artists, to amuse a vacant hour, or sketch a vacant face, we must frankly tell you at once, that there is not one. Are you frightened? Will you go on? Will you trust yourself with these savages? Try. They are rude, but they are hospitable.

The party, we have said, were all persons of great consideration; some were noble, most were rich, all had ancestors. There were the Earl and Countess of Faulconcourt. He looked as if he were fit to reconquer Palestine, and she as if she were worthy to reward

him for his valour. Misplaced in this superior age, he was *sans peur*, and she *sans reproche*. There was Lord Mildmay, an English Peer, and a French colonel. Methinks such an incident might have been a better reason for a late measure, than an Irishman being returned a member of our Imperial Parliament. There was our friend Lord St. Jerome; of course his step-mother, yet young, and some sisters, pretty as nuns. There were some cousins from the farthest north, Northumbria's bleakest bound, who came down upon Yorkshire, like the Goths upon Italy, and were revelling in what they considered a southern clime.

There was an M.P. in whom the Catholics had hopes. He had made a great speech,—not only a great speech, but a great impression. His matter certainly was not new, but well arranged, and his images not singularly original, but appositely introduced—in short, a bore, who speaking on a subject in which a new hand is indulged, and connected with the families whose cause he was pleading, was for once courteously listened to by the very men who determined to avenge themselves for their complaisance by a cough on the first opportunity. But the orator was prudent; he reserved himself, and the session closed with his fame yet full blown.

Then there were country neighbours in great store, with wives that were treasures, and daughters fresh as flowers. Among them we would particularise two gentlemen. They were great proprietors, and Catholics and Baronets, and consoled themselves by their active maintenance of the game-laws, for their inability to regulate their neighbours by any other. One was Sir Chetwode Chetwode of Chetwode; the other was Sir Tichborne Tichborne of Tichborne. It was not easy to see two men less calculated to be the slaves of a foreign and despotic power, which we all know Catholics are. Tall, and robust, and rosy, with hearts even stouter than their massy frames, they were just the characters to assemble in Runnymede, and probably, even at the present day, might have imitated their ancestors, even in their signatures. In disposition, they were much the same, though they were friends. In person, there were some differences, but they were slight. Sir Chetwode's hair was straight and white; Sir Tichborne's brown and curly. Sir Chetwode's eyes were blue; Sir Tichborne's grey. Sir Chetwode's nose was perhaps a snub; Sir Tichborne's was certainly a bottle. Sir Chetwode was somewhat garrulous, and was often like a man at a play, in the wrong box; Sir Tichborne was somewhat taciturn; but when he spoke, it was always to the purpose, and made an impression, even if it were not new. Both were kind hearts; but Sir Chetwode was jovial, Sir Tichborne rather stern. Sir Chetwode often broke into a joke, Sir Tichborne sometimes backed into a sneer.

A few of these characters were made known by Mr. Dacre to his young friend, but not many, and in an easy way,—those that stood nearest. Introduction is a formality, and a bore, and is never resorted to by your well-bred host, save in a casual way. When proper people meet at proper houses, they give each other credit for propriety, and slide into an acquaintance by degrees. The first day they catch a name; the next, they ask you whether you are the son of General ——. "No, he was my uncle."—"Ah! I knew him well. A worthy soul!" And then the thing is settled. You ride together, shoot, or fence, or hunt. A game of billiards will do no great harm; and when you part, you part with a hope that you may meet again.

Lord Mildmay was glad to meet with the son of an old friend He knew the late Duke well, and loved him better. It is pleasant to hear our fathers praised. We, too, may inherit their virtues with their lands, or cash, or bonds; and scapegraces as we are, it is agreeable to find a precedent for the blood turning out well. And, after all, there is no feeling more thoroughly delightful, than to be conscious, that the kind being from whose loins we spring, and to whom we cling with an innate and overpowering love, is viewed by others with regard, with reverence, or with admiration. There is no pride like the pride of ancestry, for it is a blending of all emotions. How immeasurably superior to the herd is the man whose father only is famous! Imagine, then, the feelings of one who can trace his line through a thousand years of heroes and of princes!

'Tis dinner! hour that I have loved, as loves the bard the twilight; but no more those visions rise, that once were wont to spring in my quick fancy. The dream is past, the spell is broke, and even the lore, on which I pondered in my first youth, is strange as figures in Egyptian tombs.

No more—no more, oh! never more to me, that hour shall bring its rapture and its bliss! No more—no more, oh! never more for me, shall Flavour sit upon her thousand thrones, and, like a syren with a sunny smile, win to renewed excesses—each more sweet! My feasting days are over: me, no more the charms of fish, or flesh, still less of fowl, can make the fool of that they made before. The fricandeau is like a dream of early love; the fricassee, with which I have so often flirted, is like the tattle of the last quadrille; and no longer are my dreams haunted with the dark passion of the rich ragout. Ye soups! o'er whose creation I have watched, like mothers o'er their sleeping child! Ye sauces! to which I have even lent a name, where are ye now? Tickling, perchance, the palate of some easy friend, who quite forgets the boon companion, whose presence once lent lustre

even to his ruby wine, and added perfume to his perfumed hock!

Our Duke, however, had not reached the age of retrospection. He pecked as prettily as any bird. Seated on the right hand of his delightful hostess, nobody could be better pleased; supervised by his jager, who stood behind his chair, no one could be better attended. He smiled, with the calm, amiable complacency of a man who feels the world is quite right.

CHAPTER IX.

"How is your Grace's horse, *Sanspareil?*" asked Sir Chetwode Chetwode of Chetwode of the Duke of St. James, shooting at the same time a sly glance at his opposite neighbour, Sir Tichborne Tichborne of Tichborne.

"Quite well, sir," said the Duke in his quietest tone, but with an air which, he flattered himself, might repress further inquiry.

"Has he got over his fatigue?" pursued the dogged Baronet, with a short gritty laugh, that sounded like a loose drag-chain dangling against the stones. "We all thought the Yorkshire air would not agree with him."

"Yet, Sir Chetwode, that could hardly be your opinion of *Sanspareil*," said Miss Dacre, "for I think, if I remember right, I had the pleasure of making you encourage our glove manufactory?"

Sir Chetwode looked a little confused. The Duke of St. James, inspirited by his fair ally, rallied, and hoped Sir Chetwode did not back his steed to a fatal extent.—"If," continued he, "I had had the slightest idea that any friend of Miss Dacre was indulging in such an indiscretion, I certainly would have interfered, and have let him known that the horse was not to win."

"Is that a fact?" asked Sir Tichborne Tichborne of Tichborne with a sturdy voice.

"Can a Yorkshireman doubt it?" rejoined the Duke. "Was it possible for any one but a mere Newmarket dandy to have entertained for a moment the supposition, that any one but May Dacre should be the Queen of the St. Leger?"

"I have heard something of this before," said Sir Tichborne, "but I did not believe it. A young friend of mine consulted me upon the subject. 'Would you advise me,' said he, 'to settle?'—'Why,' said I, 'if you can prove any bubble, my opinion is——don't; but if you cannot prove anything, my opinion is——do.'"

"Very just!—very true!" were murmured by many in the neighbourhood of the oracle; by no one with more personal sincerity than Lady Tichborne herself.

"I will write to my young friend," continued the Baronet.

"Oh, no!" said Miss Dacre. "His Grace's candour must not be abused. I have no idea of being robbed of my well-earned honours. Sir Tichborne, private conversation must be respected, and the sanctity of domestic life must not be profaned. If the tactics of Doncaster are no longer to be fair war, why, half the families in the Riding will be ruined!"

"Still—" said Sir Tichborne.

But Mr. Dacre, like a deity in a Trojan battle, interposed, and asked his opinion of a keeper.

"I hope you are a great sportsman," said Miss Dacre to the Duke, "for this is the very palace of Nimrod!"

"I have hunted; it was not very disagreeable. I sometimes shoot; it is not very stupid."

"Then, in fact, I perceive that you are a heretic.—Lord Faulconcourt, his Grace is moralising on the barbarity of the chase."

"Then he has never had the pleasure of hunting in company with Miss Dacre."

"Do you indeed follow the hounds?" asked the Duke.

"Sometimes, do worse—ride over them; but Lord Faulconcourt is fast emancipating me from the trammels of my frippery foreign education, and I have no doubt that, in another season, I shall fling off quite in style."

"You remember Mr. Annesley?" asked the Duke.

"It is difficult to forget him. He always seemed, to me, to think that the world was made on purpose for him to have the pleasure of 'cutting' it."

"Yet he was your admirer!"

"Yes, and once paid me a compliment. He told me it was the only one that he had ever uttered."

'Oh, Charley, Charley! this is excellent. We shall have a tale when we meet. What *was* the compliment?"

"It would be affectation in me to pretend that I have forgotten it. Nevertheless, you must excuse me."

"Pray, pray let me have it!"

"Perhaps you will not like it?"

"Now, I must hear it."

"Well then, he said, that talking to me was the only thing that consoled him for having to dine with you, and to dance with Lady Shropshire."

"Charles is jealous," drawled the Duke.

"Of her Grace?" asked Miss Dacre, with much anxiety.

"No; but Charles is aged, and once, when he dined with me, was taken for my uncle."

The ladies retired, and the gentlemen sat barbarously long. Sir Chetwode Chetwode of Chetwode, and Sir Tichborne Tichborne of Tichborne, were two men who drank wine independent of fashion, and exacted, to the last glass, the identical quantity which their fathers had drunk half a century before, and to which they had been used almost from their cradle. The only subject of conversation was sporting. Terrible shots, more terrible runs, neat barrels, and pretty fencers. The Duke of St. James was not sufficiently acquainted with the geography of the mansion to make a premature retreat, an operation which is looked upon with an evil eye, and which, to be successful, must be prompt and decisive, and executed with the most supercilious nonchalance. So, he consoled himself by a little chat with Lord Mildmay, who sat smiling, handsome, and mustachioed, with an empty glass, and who was as much out of water as he was out of wine. The Duke was not very learned in Parisian society; but still, with the aid of the Duchess de Berri and the Duchess de Duras, Leontine Fay, and Lady Stuart de Rothesay, they got on, and made out the time until Purgatory ceased, and Paradise opened.

For Paradise it was, although there were there assembled some thirty or forty persons not less dull than the majority of our dull race, and in those little tactics that make society less burdensome, perhaps even less accomplished. But a sunbeam will make even the cloudiest day break into smiles; a bounding fawn will banish monotony even from a wilderness; and a glass of claret, or perchance some stronger grape, will convert even the platitude of a goblet of water into a pleasing beverage,—and so May Dacre moved among her guests, shedding light, life, and pleasure.

She was not one who, shrouded in herself, leaves it to chance or fate to amuse the beings whom she has herself assembled within her halls. Nonchalance is the *métier* of your modern hostess; and so long as the house be not on fire, or the furniture not kicked, you may be even ignorant who is the priestess of the hospitable fane in which you worship.

They are right, men shrink from a fussy woman. And few can aspire to regulate the destinies of their species, even in so slight a point as an hour's amusement, without rare powers. There is no greater sin than to be *trop prononcée*. A want of tact is worse than a want of virtue. Some women, it is said, work on pretty well against the tide without the last: I never knew one who did not sink, who ever dared to sail, without the first.

Loud when they should be low, quoting the wrong person, talking on the wrong subject, teasing with notice, excruciating with

attentions, disturbing a tête-à-tête in order to make up a dance; wasting eloquence in persuading a man to participate in amusement, whose reputation depends on his social sullenness; exacting homage with a restless eye, and not permitting the least worthy knot to be untwined without their divinityships' interference; patronising the meek, anticipating the slow, intoxicated with compliment, plastering with praise, that you in return may gild with flattery; in short, energetic without elegance, active without grace, and loquacious without wit; mistaking bustle for style, raillery for badinage, and noise for gaiety—these are the characters who mar the very career they think they are creating, and who exercise a fatal influence on the destinies of all those who have the misfortune to be connected with them.

Not one of these was she, the lady of our tale. There was a quiet dignity lurking even under her easiest words and actions, which made you feel her notice, a compliment: there was a fascination in her calm smile, and in her sunlit eye, which made her invitation to amusement, itself a pleasure. If you refused, you were not pressed, but left to that isolation which you appeared to admire; if you assented, you were rewarded with a word, which made you feel how sweet was such society! Her invention never flagged,—her gaiety never ceased; yet both were spontaneous, and often were unobserved. All felt amused, and all were unconsciously her agents. Her word and her example seemed, each instant, to call forth from her companions new accomplishments, new graces, new sources of joy, and of delight. All were surprised that they were so agreeable.

CHAPTER X.

Morning came, and the great majority of the gentlemen rose early as Aurora. The chace is the favourite pastime of man and boy; yet some preferred plundering their host's preserves, by which means their slumbers were not so brief, and their breakfast less disturbed. The *battue*, however, in time, called forth its band, and then one by one, or two by two, or sometimes even three, leaning on each other's arms, and smiling in each other's faces, the ladies dropped into the breakfast-room at Castle Dacre. There, until two o'clock, a lounging meal might always be obtained, but generally by twelve the coast was clear; for our party were a natural race of beings, and would have blushed if flaming noon had caught them napping in their easy couches. Our bright bird, May Dacre,

too, rose from her bower, full of the memory of the sweetest dreams, and fresh as lilies ere they kiss the sun.

She bends before her ivory crucifix, and gazes on her blessed mother's face, where the sweet Florentine had tinged with light a countenance

"Too fair for worship, too divine for love!"

And Innocence has prayed for fresh support, and young Devotion told her holy beads. She rises with an eye of mellowed light and her soft cheek is tinted with the flush that comes from prayer. Guard over her, ye angels! wheresoe'er and whatsoe'er ye are! For she shall be your meet companion in an after-day. Then love your gentle friend, this sinless child of clay!

The morning passed as mornings ever pass where twenty women, for the most part pretty, are met together. Some read, some drew, some worked—all talked. Some wandered in the Library, and wondered why such great books were written. One sketched a favourite hero in the Picture Gallery—a Dacre, who had saved the State or Church—had fought at Cressy, or flourished at Windsor:—another picked a flower out of the Conservatory, and painted its powdered petals. Here, a purse, half-made, promised, when finished quite, to make some hero happy. Then there was chat about the latest fashions, caps and bonnets, *séduisantes*, and sleeves. As the day grew old, some rode, some walked, some drove. A pony-chair was Lady Faulconcourt's delight, whose arm was roundly turned, and graced the whip; while, on the other hand, Lady St. Jerome rather loved to try the paces of an ambling nag, because her figure was of the sublime; and she looked not unlike an Amazonian queen, particularly when Lord Mildmay was her Theseus.

He was the most consummate, polished gentleman that ever issued from the court of France. He did his friend Dacre the justice to suppose that he was a victim to his barbarous guests; but for the rest of the galloping crew, who rode and shot all day, and in the evening fell asleep just when they were wanted, he shrugged his shoulders, and he thanked his stars! In short, Lord Mildmay was the ladies' man; and in their morning dearth of beaux, to adopt their unanimous expression, "quite a host!"

Then there was archery for those who could draw a bow or point an arrow; and we are yet to learn the sight that is more dangerous for your bachelor to witness, or the ceremony which more perfectly developes all that the sex would wish us to remark, than this "old English" custom.

With all these resources, all was, of course, free and easy as the air. Your appearance was your own act. If you liked, you might

have remained, like a monk or nun, in your cell till dinner-time—but no later. Privacy and freedom are granted you in the morning, that you may not exhaust your powers of pleasing before night, and that you may reserve for those favoured hours all the new ideas that you have collected in the course of your morning adventures.

But where was he, the hero of our tale? Fencing? Craning? Hitting? Missing? Is he over, or is he under? Has he killed, or is he killed?—for the last is but the chance of war, and pheasants have the pleasure of sometimes seeing as gay birds as themselves with plumage quite as shattered. But there is no danger of the noble countenance of the Duke of St. James bearing to-day any evidence of the exploits of himself or his companions. His Grace was in one of his sublime fits, and did not rise. Luigi consoled himself for the bore of this protracted attendance, by diddling the page in waiting, at dominos.

The Duke of St. James was in one of his sublime fits. He had commenced by thinking of May Dacre, and he ended by thinking of himself. He was under that delicious and dreamy excitement which we experience, when the image of a lovely and beloved object begins to mix itself up with our own intense self-love. She was the heroine rather of an indefinite reverie, than of definite romance. Instead of his own image alone playing about his fancy, her beautiful face and springing figure intruded their exquisite presence. He no longer mused merely on his own voice and wit: he called up her tones of thrilling power; he imagined her in all the triumph of her gay repartee. In his mind's eye, he clearly watched all the graces of her existence. She moved, she gazed, she smiled. Now he was alone, and walking with her in some rich wood, sequestered, warm, solemn, dim, feeding on the music of her voice, and gazing with intenseness on the wakening passion of her devoted eye. Now they rode together, scudded over champaign, galloped down hills, scampered through valleys, all life, and gaiety, and vivacity, and spirit. Now they were in courts and crowds; and he led her with pride to the proudest kings. He covered her with jewels; but the world thought her brighter than his gems. Now they met in the most unexpected and improbable manner: now they parted with a tenderness which subdued their souls even more than rapture. Now he saved her life: now she blessed his existence. Now his reverie was too vague and misty to define its subject. It was a stream of passion, joy, sweet voices, tender tones, exulting hopes, beaming faces, chaste embraces, immortal transports!

It was three o'clock, and for the twentieth time our hero made an effort to recall himself to the realities of life. How cold, how tame, how lifeless, how imperfect, how inconsecutive, did every-

thing appear! This is the curse of reverie. But they who revel in its pleasures must bear its pains, and are content. Yet it wears out the brain, and unfits us for social life. They who indulge in it most are the slaves of solitude. They wander in a wilderness, and people it with their voices. They sit by the side of running waters, with an eye more glassy than the stream. The sight of a human being scares them more than a wild beast does a traveller; the conduct of life, when thrust upon their notice, seems only a tissue of adventures without point; and, compared with the creatures of their imagination, human nature seems to send forth only abortions.

"I must up," said the young Duke; "and this creature on whom I have lived for the last eight hours, who has, in herself, been to me the universe,—this constant companion, this cherished friend, whose voice was Passion, and whose look was Love, will meet me with all the formality of a young lady, all the coldness of a person who has never even thought of me, since she saw me last. Damnable delusion! To-morrow, I will get up, and hunt."

He called Luigi, and a shower-bath assisted him in taking a more healthy view of affairs. Yet his faithful fancy recurred to her again. He must indulge it a little. He left off dressing, and flung himself in a chair.

"And yet," he continued, "when I think of it again, there surely can be no reason that this should not turn into a romance of real life. I perceived that she was a little piqued, when we first met at Doncaster. Very natural! Very flattering! I should have been piqued. Certainly, I behaved decidedly ill. But how, in the name of Heaven, was I to know that she was the brightest little being that ever breathed! Well, I am here now! She has got her wish. And I think an evident alteration has already taken place. But she must not melt too quickly. She will not,—she will do nothing but what is exquisitely proper. How I do love this child! I dote upon her very image. It is the very thing that I have always been wanting. The women call me inconstant. I have never been *constant*. But they will not listen to us without we feign feelings, and then they upbraid us for not being influenced by them. I have sighed, I have sought, I have wept, for what I now have found. What would she give to know what is passing in my mind! By Heavens! there is no blood in England that has a better chance of being a Duchess!"

CHAPTER XI.

A CANTER is the cure for every evil, and brings the mind back to itself sooner than all the lessons of Chrysippus and Crantor. It is the only process that, at the same time, calms the feelings, and elevates the spirits, banishes blue devils, and raises one to the society of "angels ever bright and fair." It clears the mind; it cheers the heart. It is the best preparation for all enterprises, for it puts a man in good humour both with the world and himself; and, whether you are going to make a speech, or scribble a scene —whether you are about to conquer the world, or yourself,—— order your horse. As you bound along, your wit will brighten, and your eloquence blaze, your courage grow more adamantine, and your generous feelings burn with a livelier flame. And when the exercise is over, the excitement does not cease, as when it grows from music, for your blood is up, and the brilliancy of your eye is fed by your bubbling pulses. Then, my young friend, take my advice—rush into the world, and triumph will grow out of your quick life, like Victory bounding from the palm of Jove!

Our Duke ordered his horses, and as he rattled along, recovered from the enervating effects of his soft reverie. On his way home, he fell in with Miss Dacre and the two Baronets, returning on their hackneys from a hard-fought field.

"Gay sport?" asked his Grace.

"Twelve hours, by George!" answered Sir Chetwode. "I only hope Jack Wilson will take care of poor Fanny. I did not half like leaving her. Your Grace does not join us?"

"I mean to do so; but I am unfortunately a late riser."

"Hem!" said Sir Tichborne.—The monosyllable meant much.

"I have a horse which I think will suit your Grace," said Mr. Dacre, "and to which, in fact, you are entitled, for it bears the name of your house. You have ridden Hauteville, Sir Tichborne?"

"Yes; fine beast!"

"I shall certainly try his powers," said the Duke. "When is your next field-day?"

"Thursday," said Sir Tichborne; "but we shall be too early for you, I am afraid," with a gruff smile.

"Oh, no!" said the young Duke, who saw his man; "I assure you, I have been up to-day nearly two hours. Let us get on."

The first person that his Grace's eye met, when he entered the room in which they assembled before dinner, was Mrs. Dallington Vere.

Dinner was a favourite moment with the Duke of St. James,

during this visit at Castle Dacre, since it was the only time in the day that, thanks to his rank, which he now doubly valued, he could enjoy a tête-à-tête with its blooming mistress.

"I am going to hunt," said the Duke, "and I am to ride Hauteville. I hope you will set me an example on Thursday, and that I shall establish my character with Sir Tichborne."

"I am to lead on that day a bold band of archers. I have already too much neglected my practising, and I fear that my chance of the silver arrow is very slight."

"I have betted upon you with everybody," said the Duke of St. James.

"Remember Doncaster! I am afraid that May Dacre will again be the occasion of your losing your money."

"But now I am on the right side. Together, we must conquer."

"I have a presentiment that our union will not be a very fortunate one."

"Then I am ruined," said his Grace with rather a serious tone.

"I hope you have not staked anything upon such nonsense," said Miss Dacre.

"I have staked everything," said his Grace.

"Talking of stakes," said Lord St. Jerome, who pricked up his ears at a congenial subject, "do you know what they are going to do about that affair of Anderson's?"

"What does he say for himself?" asked Sir Chetwode.

"He says that he had no intention of embezzling the money, but that, as he took it for granted the point could never be decided, he thought it was against the usury laws to allow money to be idle."

"That fellow has always got an answer," said Sir Tichborne. "I hate men who have always got an answer. There is no talking common sense with them. They think no more of contradicting a gentleman than Ripley does of riding without stirrups, which I never could see the beauty of."

The Duke made his escape to-day, and, emboldened by his illustrious example, Charles Faulcon, Lord St. Jerome, and some other heroes followed, to the great disgust of Sir Chetwode Chetwode of Chetwode, and Tichborne Tichborne of Tichborne.

As the evening glided on, conversation naturally fell upon the amusements of society.

"I am sure we are tired of dancing every night," said Miss Dacre. "I wonder if we could introduce any novelty.—What think you, Bertha? You can always suggest."

"You remember the *tableaux vivans?*" said Mrs. Dallington Vere.

"Beautiful! but too elaborate a business, I fear, for us. I want something more impromptu. The *tableaux* are nothing without the most brilliant and accurate costume, and to obtain that, we must work at least for a week, and then after all, in all probability, a failure. *Ils sont trop recherchés,*" she said, lowering her voice to Mrs. Dallington, "*pour nous ici.* They must spring out of a society used to such exhibitions."

"I have a costume dress here," said the Duke of St. James.

"And I have an uniform," said Lord Mildmay.

"And then," said Mrs. Dallington, "there are cashmeres, and scarfs, and jewels to be collected. I see, however, you think it impossible."

"I fear so. However, we will think of it. In the meantime, what shall we do now? Suppose we act a fairy tale!"

"None of the girls can act," said Mrs. Dallington, with a look of kind pity.

"Let us teach them. That itself will be an amusement. Suppose we act Cinderella? There is the music of Cendrillon, and you can compose when necessary, as you go on. Clara Howard!" said May Dacre, "come here, love! We want you to be Cinderella in a little play."

"I act! oh! dear May! How can you laugh at me so! I cannot act."

"You will not have to speak. Only just move about as I direct you, while Bertha plays music."

"Oh! dear May, I cannot indeed! I never did act. Ask Eugenia!"

"Eugenia! If *you* are afraid, I am sure she will faint. I asked you, because I thought you were just the person for it."

"But only think," said poor Clara, with an imploring voice, "*to act,* May! Why, acting is the most difficult thing in the world. Acting is quite a dreadful thing. I know many ladies who will not act."

"But it is not *acting,* Clara. Well! I will be Cinderella, and you shall be one of the sisters?"

"No, dear May!"

"Well then, the Fairy?"

"No, dear, dear, dear May!"

"Well, your Grace, what am I to do with this rebellious troop?"

"Let me be Cinderella!"

"It is astonishing," said Miss Dacre, "the difficulty which you encounter in England, if you try to make people the least amusing,

or vary the regular dull routine, which announces dancing as the beautiful of diversion, and cards as the sublime."

"We are barbarians," said the Duke.

"We were not," said May Dacre. "What are *tableaux*, or acted charades, or romances, to masques, which were the splendid and various amusement of our ancestors. Last Christmas, we performed Comus here with great effect; but then we had Arundel, and he is an admirable actor."

"Curse Arundel!" thought the Duke. "I had forgotten him."

"I do not wonder," said Mrs. Dallington Vere, "at people objecting to act regular plays, for, independently of the objections,—not that I think anything of them myself,—which are urged against 'private theatricals,' the fact is, to get up a play is a very tremendous business, and one or two is your bound. But masques, where there is so little to learn by rote, a great consideration, where music and song are so exquisitely introduced, where there is such an admirable opportunity for brilliant costume, and where the scene may be beautiful without change,—such an important point,—I cannot help wondering that this national diversion is not revived."

"Suppose we were to act a Romance without the costume?" said the Duke. "Let us consider it a rehearsal. And perhaps the Misses Howard will have no objection to sing?"

"It is difficult to find a suitable romance," said Miss Dacre. "All our modern English ones are too full of fine poetry. We tried once an old ballad, but it was too long. Last Christmas, we got up a good many, and Arundel, Isabella, and myself, used to scribble some nonsense for the occasion. But I am afraid they are all either burnt or taken away. I will look in the music-case."

She went to the music-case with the Duke and Mrs. Dallington.

"No," she continued, "not one, not a single one. But what are these?" She looked at some lines written in pencil in a music-book. "Oh! here is something, too slight, but it will do. —You see," she continued, reading it to the Duke, "by the introduction of the same line in every verse, describing the same action, a back-scene is, as it were, created, and the story, if you can call it such, proceeds in front. Really, I think, we might make something of this."

Mr. Dacre and some others were at whist. The two Baronets were together, talking over the morning's sport. Ecarté covered a flirtation between Lord Mildmay and Lady St. Jerome. Miss Dacre assembled her whole troop; and, like a manager with a new play, read in the midst of them the ballad, and gave them direc-

tions for their conduct. A japan screen was unfolded at the end of the room. Two couches indicated the limits of the stage. Then taking her guitar, she sang with a sweet voice and arch simplicity, these simpler lines:—

I.

"Childe Dacre stands in his father's hall,
While all the rest are dancing;
Childe Dacre gazes on the wall,
While brightest eyes are glancing.
Then prythee tell me, Gentles gay!
What makes our Childe so dull to-day?"

Each verse was repeated. In the background, they danced a cotillon. In the front, the Duke of St. James, as Childe Dacre, leant against the wall, with arms folded, and eyes fixed,—in short, in most romantic mood, and in an attitude which commanded great applause.

II.

"I cannot tell, unless it be,
While all the rest are dancing,
The Lady Alice, on the sea,
With brightest eyes is glancing,
Or muses on the twilight hour,
Will bring Childe Dacre to her bower."

Mrs. Dallington Vere advances as the Lady Alice. Her walk is abrupt; her look anxious and distracted; she seems to be listening for some signal. She falls into a musing attitude, motionless and graceful as a statue. Clara Howard alike marvels at her genius and her courage.

III.

"Childe Dacre hears the curfew chime,
While all the rest are dancing;
Unless I find a fitting rhyme,
Oh! here ends my Romancing!
But see! her lover's at her feet!
Oh! words of joy! oh! meeting sweet!"

The Duke advances: chivalric passion in his every gesture. The Lady Alice rushes to his arms, with that look of trembling transport, which tells the tale of stolen love. They fall into a group, which would have made the fortune of an Annual.

IV.

"Then let us hope, when next I sing,
And all the rest are dancing,
Our Childe a gentle bride may bring
All other joys enhancing.
Then we will bless the twilight hour
That call'd him to a lady's bower."

The Duke led Mrs. Dallington to the dancers with courtly grace. There was great applause, but the spirit of fun and one-and-twenty inspired him, and he led off a gallop. In fact, it was a most elegant romp. The two Baronets started from their slumbers, and Lord Mildmay called for Mademoiselle Dacre. The call was echoed. Miss Dacre yielded to the public voice, and acted to the life the gratified and condescending air of a first-rate performer. Lord Mildmay called for Madame Dallington. Miss Dacre led on her companion, as Sontag would Malabran. There was no wreath at hand, but the Duke of St. James robbed his coat of its rose, and offered it on his knee to Mademoiselle, who presented it with Parisian feeling to her rival. The scene was as superb as anything at the *Académie*.

CHAPTER XII.

"We certainly must have a Masque," said the young Duke, as he threw himself into his chair, satisfied with his performance.

"You must open Hauteville, with one," said Mrs. Dallington.

"A capital idea; but we will practise at Dacre first."

"When is Hauteville to be finished?" asked Mrs. Dallington. "I shall really complain if we are to be kept out of it much longer. I believe I am the only person in the Riding who has not been there."

"I have been there," said the Duke, "and am afraid I must go again; for Sir Carte has just come down for a few days, and I promised to meet him. It is a sad bore. I wish it were finished."

"Take me with you," said Mrs. Dallington; "take us all, and let us make a party."

"An admirable idea," exclaimed the young Duke, with a brightening countenance. "What admirable ideas you have, Mrs. Dallington! This is, indeed, turning business into pleasure! What says our hostess?"

"Oh! I will join you."

"To-morrow, then?" said the Duke.

"To-morrow! You are rapid!"

"Never postpone, never prepare: that is your own rule. To-morrow, to-morrow—all must go."

"Papa, will you go to-morrow to Hauteville?"

"Are you serious?"

"Yes," said Miss Dacre: "we never postpone; we never prepare."

"But do not you think a day, at least, had better intervene?" urged Mr. Dacre; "we shall be unexpected."

"I vote for to-morrow," said the Duke.

"To-morrow!" was the universal exclamation. To-morrow was carried.

"I will write to Blanche at once," said the Duke.

Mrs. Dallington Vere ran for the writing materials, and his Grace indicted the following pithy note.

"Half-past Ten.—Castle Dacre.

"DEAR SIR CARTE,

"OUR party here intend to honour Hauteville with a visit to-morrow, and anticipate the pleasure of viewing the improvements, with yourself for their cicerone. Let Rawdon know immediately of this. They tell me here that the sun rises about six. As we shall not be with you till noon, I have no doubt your united energies will be able to make all requisite preparations. We may be thirty or forty. Believe me, dear Sir Carte,

"Your faithful servant,

"ST. JAMES."

"Carlstein bears this, which you will receive in an hour. Let me have a line by return."

CHAPTER XIII.

It was a morning all dew and sunshine, soft yet bright, just fit for a hawking party, for dames of high degree, feathered cavaliers, ambling palfreys, and tinkling bells. Our friends rose early, and assembled punctually. All went, and all went on horseback; but they sent before a couple of carriages for the return, in case the ladies should be wearied with excessive pleasure. The cavalcade, for it was no less, broke into parties which were often out of sight of each other. The Duke and Lord St. Jerome, Clara Howard and Charles Faulcon, Miss Dacre and Mrs. Dallington, formed one, and, as they flattered themselves, not the least brilliant. They were all in high spirits, and his Grace lectured on riding-habits with erudite enthusiasm.

Their road lay through a country wild and woody, where crag and copse beautifully intermixed with patches of the richest cultivation. Halfway, they passed Rosemount, a fanciful pavilion where the Dukes of St. James sometimes sought that elegant simplicity which was not afforded by all the various charms of their magnificent Hauteville. At length they arrived at the park-gate of the castle, which might itself have passed for a tolerable mansion. It was ancient and embattled, flanked by a couple of sturdy towers, and gave a noble promise of the baronial pile which it announced. The park was a petty principality; and its apparently illimitable extent, its rich variety of surface, its ancient woods and numerous deer, attracted the attention and the admiration even of those who had been born in these magical enclosures.

Away they cantered over the turf, each moment with their blood more sparkling. A turn in the road, and Hauteville with its donjon keep and lordly flag, and many-windowed line of long perspective; its towers, and turrets, and terraces, bathed with the soft autumnal sun, met their glad sight.

"Your Majesty is welcome to my poor castle!" said the young Duke, bowing with head uncovered to Miss Dacre.

"Nay, we are at the best but captive princesses about to be immured in that fearful keep; and this is the way you mock us!"

"I am content that you shall be my prisoner."

"A struggle for freedom!" said Miss Dacre, looking back to Mrs. Dallington, and she galloped towards the castle.

Lord Mildmay and Lady St. Jerome cantered up, and the rest soon assembled. Sir Carte came forward, all smiles, with a clerk of the works bearing a portfolio of plans. A crowd of servants, for the Duke maintained a full establishment at Hauteville,

advanced, and the fair equestrians were dismounted. They shook their habits and their curls, vowed that riding was your only exercise, and that dust in the earthly economy was a blunder. And then they entered the castle.

Room after room, gallery after gallery——you know the rest. Shall we describe the silk hangings, and the reverend tapestry, the agate tables, and the tall screens, the china, and the armour, the state beds, and the curious cabinets, and the family pictures mixed up so quaintly with Italian and Flemish art? But we pass from meek Madonnas and seraphic saints—from gleaming Claudes and Guidos soft as Eve,—from Rubens' satyrs and Albano's boys, and even from those gay and natural medleys—paintings that cheer the heart—where fruit and flower, with their brilliant bloom, call to a feast the butterfly and bee;—we pass from these to square-headed ancestors by Holbein, all black velvet and gold chains; cavaliers, by Vandyke, all lace and spurs, with pointed beards, that did more execution even than their pointed swords; patriots and generals, by Kneller, in Blenheim wigs and Steenkirk cravats, all robes and armour; scarlet judges that supported ship-money, and purple bishops, who had not been sent to the Tower. Here was a wit who had sipped his coffee at Button's, and there some mad Alcibiades duke who had exhausted life ere he had finished youth, and yet might be consoled for all his flashing follies, could he witness the bright eyes that lingered on his countenance, while they glanced over all the patriotism and all the piety, all the illustrious courage and all the historic craft, which, when living, it was daily told him that he had shamed. Ye dames, with dewy eyes, that Lely drew! have we forgotten you? No! by that sleepy loveliness, that reminds us that night belongs to beauty, ye were made for memory! And oh! our grandmothers, that we now look upon as girls, breathing in Reynolds' playful canvas, let us also pay our homage to your grace!

The Chapel, where you might trace art from the richly Gothic tomb, designed by some neighbouring abbot, to the last effort of Flaxman; the Riding-house, where, brightly framed, looked down upon you with a courtly smile the first and gartered duke, who had been Master of the Horse, were alike visited, and alike admired. They mounted the summit of the round tower, and looked around upon the broad county, which they were proud to call their own. Amid innumerable seats, where blazed the hearths of the best blood of England, they recognised, with delight, the dome of Dacre and the woods of Dallington. They walked along a terrace not unworthy of the promenade of a court; they visited the flower gardens, where the peculiar style of every nation was in turn imitated; they loitered in the vast conservatories, which

were themselves a palace; they wandered in the wilderness, where the invention of consummate art presented them with the ideal of nature. In this poetic solitude, where all was green, and still, and sweet, or where the only sound was falling water or fluttering birds, the young Duke recurred to the feelings which, during the last momentous week, had so mastered his nature, and he longed to wind his arm round the beautiful being, without whom this enchanting domain was a dreary waste.

They assembled in a green retreat, where the energetic Sir Carte had erected a marquee, and where a collation greeted the eyes of those who were well prepared for it. Rawdon had also done his duty, and the guests, who were aware of the sudden manner in which the whole affair had arisen, wondered at the magic which had produced a result worthy of a week's preparation. But it is a great thing to be a young Duke. The pasties, and the venison, and the game, the pines, and the peaches, and the grapes, the cakes, and the confectionary, and the ices, which proved that the still-room at Hauteville was not an empty name, were all most popular. But the wines—they were something miraculous! And as the finest cellars in the country had been ransacked for excellence and variety, it is not wonderful that their produce obtained a panegyric. There was hock of a century old, which made all stare, though we, for our part, cannot see, or rather taste, the beauty of this antiquity. Wine, like woman, in our opinion, should be not too old—so we raise our altar to the infant Bacchus; but this is not the creed of the million, nor was it the persuasion of Sir Chetwode Chetwode of Chetwode, or of Sir Tichborne Tichborne of Tichborne, good judges both. The Johannisberger quite converted them. They no longer disliked the young Duke. They thought him a fool, to be sure, but at the same time a very good-natured one. In the meantime, all were interested, and Carlstein with his key bugle, from out a neighbouring brake, afforded the only luxury that was wanting.

It is six o'clock—carriages are ordered, and horses are harnessed. Back, back to Dacre! But not at the lively rate at which they had left that lordly hall this morning. They are all alike inclined to move slowly; they are silent, yet serene and satisfied; they ponder upon the reminiscences of a delightful morning, and also of a delightful meal. Perhaps, they are a little weary: perhaps, they wish to gaze upon the sunset.

It is eight o'clock, and they enter the park-gates. Dinner is universally voted a bore, even by the Baronets. Coffee covers the retreat of many a wearied bird to her evening bower. The rest lounge on a couch or sofa, or chew the cud of memory on an ottoman. It was a day of pleasure which had been pleasant.

That was certain, but that was past. Who is to be Duchess of St. James? Answer this—May Dacre, or Bertha Vere, or Clara Howard? Lady St. Jerome, is it to be a daughter of thy house? Lady Faulconcourt, art thou to be hailed as the unrivalled mother? 'Tis mystery all, as must always be the future of this world. We muse, we plan, we hope, but nought is certain but that which is nought; for, a question answered, a doubt satisfied, an end attained—what are they but fit companions for clothes out of fashion, cracked china, and broken fans?

Our hero was neither wearied nor sleepy, for his mind was too full of exciting fancies to think of the interests of his body. As all were withdrawing, he threw his cloak about him, and walked on the terrace. It was a night soft as the rhyme that sighs from Rogers' shell, and brilliant as a phrase just turned by Moore. The thousand stars smiled from their blue pavilions, and the moon shed the mild light that makes a lover muse. Fragrance came in airy waves from trees rich with the golden orange, and from out the woods there ever and anon arose a sound, deep and yet hushed, and mystical, and soft. It could not be the wind!

His heart was full, his hopes were sweet, his fate pledged on a die. And in this shrine, where all was like his love, immaculate and beautiful, he vowed a faith which had not been returned. Such is the madness of love! Such is the magic of beauty!

Music rose upon the air. Some huntsmen were practising their horns. The triumphant strain elevated his high hopes,—the tender tone accorded with his emotions. He paced up and down the terrace in excited reverie, fed by the music. In imagination, she was with him: she spoke, she smiled, she loved. He gazed upon her beaming countenance; his soul thrilled with tones which only she could utter. He pressed her to his throbbing and tumultuous breast!

The music stopped. He fell from his seventh heaven. He felt all the exhaustion of his prolonged reverie. All was flat, dull, unpromising. The moon seemed dim, the stars were surely fading, the perfume of the trees was faint, the wind of the woods was a howling demon. Exhausted, dispirited, ay! almost desperate,—with a darkened soul and staggering pace, he regained his chamber.

CHAPTER XIV.

THERE is nothing more strange, but nothing more certain, than the different influence which the seasons of night and day exercise upon the moods of our minds. Him whom the moon sends to bed with a head full of misty meaning, the sun will summon in the morning with a brain clear and lucid as his beam. Twilight makes us pensive; Aurora is the goddess of activity. Despair curses at midnight; Hope blesses at noon.

And the bright beams of Phœbus—why should this good old name be forgotten?—called up our Duke rather later than a monk at matins, in a less sublime disposition than that in which he had paced among the orange-trees of Dacre. His passion remained, but his poetry was gone. He was all confidence, and gaiety, and love, and panted for the moment when he could place his mother's coronet on the only head that was worthy to share the proud fortunes of the house of Hauteville.

"Luigi, I will rise. What is going on to-day?"

"The gentlemen are all out, your Grace."

"And the ladies?"

"Are going to the Archery Ground, your Grace."

"Ah! she will be there, Luigi!"

"Yes, your Grace."

"My robe, Luigi."

"Yes, your Grace."

"I forgot what I was going to say.—Luigi!"

"Yes, your Grace."

"Luigi, Luigi, Luigi," hummed the Duke, perfectly unconscious, and beating time with his brush. His valet stared, but more when his Lord, with eyes fixed on the ground, fell into a soliloquy, not a word of which, most provokingly, was audible, except to my reader.

"How beautiful she looked yesterday upon the keep, when she tried to find Dacre! I never saw such eyes in my life! I must speak to Lawrence immediately. I think I must have her face painted in four positions, like that picture of Lady Alice Gordon, by Sir Joshua. Her full face is sublime; and yet there is a piquancy in the profile, which I am not sure—and yet again, when her countenance is a little bent towards you, and her neck gently turned, I think that is, after all—but then when her eyes meet yours, full—oh! yes! yes! yes! That first look at Doncaster. It is impressed upon my brain like self-consciousness. I never can forget it. But then her smile! When she sang on Tuesday

night! By Heavens!" he exclaimed aloud, "life with such a creature is immortality!"

About one o'clock, the Duke descended into empty chambers. Not a soul was to be seen. The birds had flown. He determined to go to the Archery Ground. He opened the door of the music-room. He found Miss Dacre alone at a table, writing. She looked up, and his heart yielded, as her eye met his.

"You do not join the nymphs?" asked the Duke.

"I have lent my bow," she said, "to an able substitute."

She resumed her task, which he perceived was copying music. He advanced, he seated himself at the table, and began playing with a pen. He gazed upon her, his soul thrilled with unwonted sensations, his frame shook with emotions which, for a moment, deprived him even of speech. At length he spoke in a low and tremulous tone—

"I fear I am disturbing you, Miss Dacre?"

"By no means," she said, with a courteous air; and then remembering she was a hostess, "Is there anything that your Grace requires?"

"Much—more than I can hope. O, Miss Dacre! suffer me to tell you, how much I admire, how much I love you!"

She started, she stared at him with distended eyes, and her small mouth was open like a ring.

"My Lord!"

"Yes!" he continued in a rapid and impassioned tone. "I at length find an opportunity of giving way to feelings, which it has been long difficult for me to control. O, beautiful being! tell me —tell me that I am blessed!"

"My Lord! I—I am most honoured—pardon me if I say, most surprised."

"Yes! from the first moment that your ineffable loveliness rose on my vision, my mind has fed upon your image. Our acquaintance has only realised, of your character, all that my imagination had preconceived. Such unrivalled beauty, such unspeakable grace, could only have been the companions of that exquisite taste, and that charming delicacy, which, even to witness, has added great felicity to my existence. Oh! tell me—tell me that they shall be for me something better than a transient spectacle. Condescend to share the fortune and the fate of one, who only esteems his lot in life, because it enables him to offer you a station not utterly unworthy of your transcendent excellence!"

"I have permitted your Grace to proceed too far. For your, for my own sake, I should sooner have interfered, but, in truth, I was so astounded at your unexpected address, that I have but just succeeded in recalling my scattered senses. Let me again express to

you my acknowledgments for an honour which I feel is great; but permit me to regret, that for your offer of your hand and fortune, these acknowledgments are all I can return."

"Miss Dacre! am I then to wake to the misery of being rejected?"

"A little week ago, Duke of St. James, we were strangers. It would be hard, if it were in the power of either of us now to deliver the other to *misery*."

"You are offended, then, at the presumption which, on so slight an acquaintance, has aspired to your hand. It is indeed a high possession. I thought only of you, not of myself. Your perfections require no time for recognition. Perhaps my imperfections require time for indulgence. Let me then hope!"

"You have misconceived my meaning, and I regret that a foolish phrase should occasion you the trouble of fresh solicitude, and me the pain of renewed refusal. In a word, it is not in my power to accept your hand."

He rose from the table, and stifled the groan which struggled in his throat. He paced up and down the room with an agitated step and a convulsed brow, which marked the contest of his passions. But he was not desperate. His heart was full of high resolves, and mighty meanings, indefinite but great. He felt like some conqueror, who, marking the battle going against him, proud in his infinite resources and invincible power, cannot credit the madness of a defeat. And the lady, she leant her head upon her delicate arm, and screened her countenance from his scrutiny.

He advanced.

"Miss Dacre! pardon this prolonged intrusion; forgive this renewed discourse. But let me only hope, that a more favoured rival is the cause of my despair, and I will thank you——"

"My Lord Duke," she said, looking up with a faint blush, but with a flashing eye, and in an audible and even energetic tone—"the question you ask is neither fair nor manly; but as you choose to press me, I will say, that it requires no recollection of a third person to make me decline the honour which you intended me."

"Miss Dacre! you speak in anger, almost in bitterness. Believe me," he added, rather with an air of pique, "had I imagined from your conduct towards me, that I was an object of dislike, I would have spared you this inconvenience, and myself this humiliation."

"My Lord, as mistress of Castle Dacre, my conduct to all its inmates is the same. The Duke of St. James, indeed, had both hereditary and personal claims to be considered here as something better than a mere inmate; but your Grace has elected to

dissolve all connection with our house, and I am not desirous of assisting you in again forming any."

"Harsh words, Miss Dacre!"

"Harsher truth, my Lord Duke," said Miss Dacre, rising from her seat, and twisting a pen with agitated energy.—"You have prolonged this interview, not I. Let it end, for I am not skilful in veiling my mind; and I should regret, here at least, to express what I have hitherto succeeded in concealing."

"It cannot end thus," said his Grace: "let me, at any rate, know the worst. You have, if not too much kindness, at least too much candour, to part so!"

"I am at a loss to understand," said Miss Dacre, "what other object our conversation can have for your Grace, than to ascertain my feelings, which I have already declared more than once, upon a point which you have already more than once urged. If I have not been sufficiently explicit, or sufficiently clear, let me tell you, sir, that nothing but the request of a parent whom I adore, would have induced me even to speak to the person who had dared to treat him with contempt."

"Miss Dacre!"

"Your Grace is moved, or you affect to be moved. 'Tis well:—if a word from a stranger can thus affect you, you may be better able to comprehend the feelings of that person whose affections you have so long outraged—your equal in blood, Duke of St. James, your superior in all other respects."

"Beautiful being!" said his Grace advancing, falling on his knee, and seizing her hand—"Pardon, pardon, pardon! Like your admirable sire, forgive—cast into oblivion all remembrance of my fatal youth. Is not your anger—is not this moment, a bitter, an utter expiation for all my folly, all my thoughtless, all my inexperienced folly,—for it was no worse? On my knees, and in the face of Heaven, let me pray you to be mine. I have staked my happiness upon this venture. In your power is my fate. On you it depends whether I shall discharge my duty to society, to the country to which I owe so much—or whether I shall move in it without an aim, an object, or a hope. Think—think only of the sympathy of our dispositions—the similarity of our tastes. Think, think only of the felicity that might be ours. Think of the universal good that we might achieve! Is there anything that human reason could require, that we could not command? any object which human mind could imagine, that we could not obtain? And, as for myself, I swear that I will be the creature of your will. Nay, nay! oaths are mockery, vows are idle! Is it possible to share existence with you, beloved girl! without watching for your every wish,—without——"

"My Lord, my Lord, this must end. You do not recommend yourself to me by this rhapsody. What do you know of me, that you should feel all this? I am rather different from what you expected; that, that is all. Another week, and another woman may command a similar effusion. I do not believe you to be insincere. There would be more hope for you if you were. You act from impulse, and not from principle. This is your best excuse for your conduct to my father. It is one that I accept, but which will certainly ever prevent me from becoming your wife. Farewell!"

"Nay, nay! let us not part in enmity!"

"Enmity and friendship are very strong words; words that are very much abused. There is another, which must describe our feelings towards the majority of mankind, and mine towards you. Substitute for enmity—indifference."

She quitted the room: he remained there for some minutes, leaning on the mantel-piece, and then rushed into the Park. He hurried for some distance with the rapid and uncertain step which betokens a tumultuous and disordered mind. At length, he found himself among the ruins of Dacre Abbey. The silence and solemnity of the scene made him conscious, by the contrast, of his own agitated existence,—the desolation of the beautiful ruin accorded with his own crushed and beautiful hopes. He sat himself at the feet of the clustered columns, and, covering his face with his hands, he wept.

They were the first tears that he had shed since childhood, and they were agony. Men weep but once, but then their tears are blood. We think almost their hearts must crack a little, so heartless are they ever after. Enough of this.

It is bitter to leave our father's hearth for the first time: bitter is the eve of our return, when a thousand fears rise in our haunted souls. Bitter are hope deferred, and self-reproach, and power unrecognised. Bitter is poverty; bitterer still is debt. It is bitter to be neglected; it is more bitter to be misunderstood.

It is bitter to lose an only child. It is bitter to look upon the land which once was ours. Bitter is a sister's woe, a brother's scrape; bitter a mother's tear, and bitterer still, a father's curse. Bitter are a briefless bag, a curate's bread, a diploma that brings no fee. Bitter is half-pay!

It is bitter to muse on vanished youth; it is bitter to lose an election, or a suit. Bitter are rage suppressed, vengeance unwreaked, and prize-money kept back. Bitter are a failing crop, a glutted market, and a shattering spec. Bitter are rents in arrear, and tithes in kind. Bitter are salaries reduced, and perquisites destroyed. Bitter is a tax, particularly if misapplied; a rate, par-

ticularly if embezzled. Bitter is a trade too full, and bitterer still a trade that has worn out. Bitter is a bore!

It is bitter to lose one's hair or teeth. It is bitter to find our annual charge exceed our income. It is bitter to hear of others' fame when we are boys. It is bitter to resign the seals we fain would keep. It is bitter to hear the winds blow when we have ships at sea, or friends. Bitter are a broken friendship and a dying love. Bitter a woman scorned, a man betrayed!

Bitter is the secret woe which none can share. Bitter are a brutal husband and a faithless wife, a silly daughter and a sulky son. Bitter are a losing card, a losing horse. Bitter the public hiss, the private sneer. Bitter are old age without respect, manhood without wealth, youth without fame. Bitter is the east wind's blast; bitter a stepdame's kiss. It is bitter to mark the woe which we cannot relieve. It is bitter to die in a foreign land.

But bitterer far than this, than these, than all, is waking from our first delusion! For then we first feel the nothingness of self—that hell of sanguine spirits. All is dreary, blank, and cold. The sun of hope sets without a ray, and the dim night of dark despair shadows only phantoms. The spirits that guard round us in our pride, have gone. Fancy, weeping, flies. Imagination droops her glittering pinions, and sinks into the earth. Courage has no heart, and Love seems a traitor. A busy demon whispers in our ear that all is vain and worthless, and we among the vainest of a worthless crew!

And so our young friend here now depreciated as much as he had before exaggerated his powers. There seemed not on the earth's face a more forlorn, a more feeble, a less estimable wretch than himself, but just now a hero—O! what a fool, what a miserable, contemptible fool was he! With what a light tongue and lighter heart had he spoken of this woman who despised, who spurned him! His face blushed, ay! burnt at the remembrance of his reveries and his fond monologues! The very recollection made him shudder with disgust. He looked up to see if any demon were jeering him among the ruins.

His heart was so crushed, that Hope could not find even one desolate chamber to smile in. His courage was so cowed, that far from indulging in the distant romance, to which, under these circumstances, we sometimes fly, he only wondered at the absolute insanity which, for a moment, had permitted him to aspire to her possession. "Sympathy of dispositions! Similarity of tastes, forsooth! Why, we are different existences! Nature could never have made us for the same world, or with the same clay! O, consummate being! why—why did we meet? Why—why are

my eyes at length unsealed? Why—why do I at length feel conscious of my utter worthlessness? O God! I am miserable!"

He arose, and hastened to the house. He gave orders to Luigi and his people to follow him to Rosemount with all practicable speed, and having left a note for his host with the usual excuse, he mounted his horse, and in half an hour's time, with a countenance like a stormy sea, was galloping through the park gates of Dacre.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

THE day after the arrival of the Duke of St. James at Cleve Park, his host, Sir Lucius Grafton, received the following note from Mrs. Dallington Vere:

"Castle Dacre, ———, 182—

"MY DEAR BARONET,

"YOUR pigeon has flown, otherwise I should have tied this under his wing, for I take it for granted he is trained too dexterously to alight anywhere but at Cleve.

"I confess that, in this affair, your penetration has exceeded mine. I hope throughout it will serve you as well. I kept my promise, and arrived here only a few hours after him. The prejudice which I had long observed in the little Dacre against your protégé was too marked to render any interference on my part at once necessary, nor did I anticipate even beginning to *give her good advice* for a month to come. Heaven knows what a month of his conduct might have done! A month achieves such wonders! And, to do him justice, he was most agreeable; but our young gentleman grew impetuous, and so, the day before yesterday he vanished, and in the most extraordinary manner! Sudden departure,—unexpected business; letter and servants both left behind; Monsieur grave, and a little astonished; and the Demoiselle thoughtful at the least, but not curious. Very suspicious this last circumstance! A flash crossed my mind, but I could gain nothing, even with my most dexterous wiles, from the little Dacre, who is a most unmanageable heroine. However, with the good assistance of a person who in a French tragedy would figure as my confidante, and who is the sister of your Lachen, something was learnt from Monsieur le Valet, to say nothing of the page. All agree; a countenance pale as death, orders given in a low voice of suppressed passion, and sundry oaths. I hear he sulked the night at Rosemount.

"Now, my good Lucy, listen to me. Lose no time about the *great object*. If possible, let this autumn *be distinguished*. You have an idea that our friend is a very manageable sort of personage; in phrase less courteous, is sufficiently weak for all reasonable purposes. I am not quite so clear about this. He is at present very young, and his character is not formed; but there is a

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something about him which makes me half fear, that if you permit his knowledge of life to increase too much, you may quite fear having neglected my admonitions. At present, his passions are high. Use his blood while it is hot, and remember, that if you count on his rashness, you may, as nearly in the present instance, yourself rue it. In a word, *dispatch*. The deed that is done, you know——

"My kindest remembrances to dear Lady Afy, and tell her how much I regret I cannot avail myself of her most friendly invitation. Considering, as I know, she hates me, I really do feel flattered.

"You cannot conceive what Vandals I am at present among! Nothing but my sincere regard for you, my much-valued friend, would induce me to stay here a moment. I have received from the countenance of the Dacres all the benefit which a marked connection with so respectable and so moral a family confers, and I am tired to death. But it is a well-devised plan to have a reserve in the battles of society. You understand me; and I am led to believe that it has had the best effect, and silenced even the loudest. 'Confound their politics!' as dear little Squib says, from whom I had the other day the funniest letter, which I have half a mind to send you, only you figure in it so much!

"Burlington is at Brighton, and all my friends, except yourself. I have a few barbarians to receive at Dallington, and then I shall be off there. Join us as quickly as you can. Do you know, I think that it would be an excellent *locale* for the *scena*. We might drive them over to Dieppe:—only do not put off your visit too long, or else there will be no steamers.

"The Duke of Shropshire has had a fit, but rallied. He vows he was only picking up a letter, or tying his shoe-string, or something of that kind; but Ruthven says, he dined off *Boudins à la Sefton*, and that, after a certain age, you know——

"Lord Darrell is with Annesley and Co. I understand, most friendly towards me, which is pleasant; and Charles, who is my firm ally, takes care to confirm the kind feeling. I am glad about this.

"Felix Crawlegh, or Crawley, as some say, has had an affair with Tommy Seymour, at Grant's. Felix was grand about porter, or something, which he never drank, and all that. Tommy, who knew nothing about the brewing father, asked him, very innocently, why malt liquors had so degenerated. Conceive the agony, particularly as Lady Selina is said to have no violent aversion to quartering her arms with a mash-tub, *argent*.

"The Macaronis are most hospitable this year; and the Marquess says, that the only reason that they kept in before was, because he

was determined to see whether economy was practicable. He finds it is not—so, now, expense is no object.

"Augustus Henley is about to become a senator! What do you think of this? He says, he has tried everything for an honest livelihood, and even once began a novel, but could not get on; which, Squib says, is odd, because there is a receipt going about for that operation, which saves all trouble.

"'Take a pair of pistols and a pack of cards, a cookery-book, and a set of new quadrilles; mix them up with half an intrigue and a whole marriage, and divide them into three equal portions.' Now, as Augustus has both fought and gamed, dined and danced, I suppose it was the morality which posed him, or perhaps the marriage.

"They say there is something about Lady Flutter, but, I should think, all talk. Most probably, a report set about by her Ladyship. Lord Flame has been blackballed, that is certain. But there is no more news, except that the Wiltshires are going to the Continent—we know why; and that the Spankers are making more dash than ever—God knows how! Adieu! B. D. V."

The letter ended: all things end at last. A she-correspondent for our money—provided always that she does not *cross*.

Our Duke—in spite of his disgrace, he still is ours, and yours too, I hope, gentlest reader,—our Duke found himself at Cleve Park again, in a different circle from the one to which he had been chiefly accustomed. The sporting world received him with open arms. With some of these worthies, as owner of *Sanspareil*, he had become slightly acquainted. But what is half a morning at Tattersall's, or half a week at Doncaster, compared with a meeting at Newmarket? There, your congenial spirits congregate. Freemasons every man of them! No uninitiated wretch there dares to disturb, with his profane presence, the hallowed mysteries. There, the race is not a peg to hang a few days of dissipation on, but a sacred ceremony, to the celebration of which all men and all circumstances tend and bend. No balls, no concerts, no public breakfasts, no bands from Litolf, no singers from Welsh, no pine-apples from Gunter, are there called for by thoughtless thousands, who have met, not from any affection for the turf's delights or their neighbour's cash, but to sport their splendid liveries, and to disport their showy selves.

The house was full of men, whose talk was full of bets. The women were not as bad, but they were not plentiful. Some Lords and Signors were there without their dames. Lord Bloomerly, for instance, alone, or rather with his eldest son, Lord Bloom, just of age, and already a knowing hand. His father introduced him

to all his friends, with that smiling air of self-content, which men assume when they introduce a youth, who may show the world what they were at his years: so the Earl presented the young Viscount, as a lover presents his miniature to his mistress. Lady Afy shone in unapproached perfection. A dull Marchioness, a *gauche* Viscountess, and some other dames, who did not look like the chorus of this Diana, acted as capital foils, and permitted her to meet her cavalier under what are called the most favourable auspices.

They dined, and discussed the agricultural interest in all its exhausted ramifications. Wheat was sold over again, even at a higher price; poachers were recalled to life, or from beyond seas, to be re-killed, or re-transported. The poor-laws were a very rich topic, and the poor lands a very ruinous one. But all this was merely the light conversation, just to vary, in an agreeable mode, which all could understand, the regular material of discourse, and that was of stakes and stallions, pedigrees and plates.

Our party rose early, for their pleasure was their business. Here were no lounging dandies, and no exclusive belles, who kept their bowers until hunger, which also drives down wolves from the Pyrenees, brought them from their mystical chambers, to luncheon and to life. In short, an air of interest, a serious and a thoughtful look, pervaded every countenance. Fashion was kicked to the devil, and they were all too much in earnest to have any time for affectation.

Breakfast was over, and it was a regular meal at which all attended, and they hurried to the course. It seems, when the party arrive, that they are the only spectators. A party or two come on to keep them company. A club discharges a crowd of gentlemen, a stable a crowd of grooms. At length, a sprinkling of human beings is collected, but all is wondrous still, and wondrous cold. The only thing that gives sign of life, is Lord Breedall's movable stand; and the only intimation that fire is still an element, is the sailing breath of a stray cigar.

"This, then, is Newmarket!" exclaimed the young Duke. "If it required five-and-twenty thousand pounds to make Doncaster amusing, a plumb, at least, will go in rendering Newmarket endurable."

But the young Duke was wrong. There was a fine race, and the connoisseurs got enthusiastic. Sir Lucius Grafton was the winner. The Duke sympathised with his friend's success.

He began galloping about the course, and his blood warmed. He paid a visit to *Sanspareil*. He heard his steed was still a favourite for a coming race. He backed his steed, and *Sanspareil* won. He began to find Newmarket not so disagreeable. In a

word, our friend was in an entirely new scene, which was exactly the thing he required. He was interested, and forgot, or rather forcibly expelled from his mind, his late overwhelming adventure. He grew popular with the set. His courteous manners, his affable address, his gay humour, and the facility with which he adopted their tone and temper, joined with his rank and wealth, subdued the most rugged and the coldest hearts. Even the jockeys were civil to him, and welcomed him with a sweet smile and gracious nod, instead of the sour grin, and malicious wink, with which those characters generally greet a stranger—those mysterious characters who, in their influence over their superiors, and their total want of sympathy with their species, are our only match for the Oriental Eunuch.

He grew, we say, popular with the set. They were glad to see among them a young nobleman of spirit. He became a member of the Jockey Club, and talked of taking a villa in the neighbourhood. All recommended the step, and assured him of their readiness to dine with him as often as he pleased. He was an universal favourite; and even Chuck Farthing, the gentleman jockey, with a cock-eye, and a knowing shake of his head, squeaked out, in a sporting treble, one of his monstrous fudges about the Prince in days of yore, and swore that, like his Royal Highness, the young Duke made the Market all alive.

The heart of our hero was never insensible to flattery. He could not refrain from comparing his present with his recent situation. The constant consideration of all around him, the affectionate cordiality of Sir Lucius, and the unobtrusive devotion of Lady Afy, melted his soul. These agreeable circumstances graciously whispered to him each hour, that he could scarcely be the desolate and despicable personage which lately, in a moment of madness, he had fancied himself. He began to indulge the satisfactory idea, that a certain person, however unparalleled in form and mind, had perhaps acted with a little precipitation. Then his eyes met those of Lady Aphrodite; and, full of these feelings, he exchanged a look which reminded him of their first meeting; though now mellowed by gratitude, and regard, and esteem, it was perhaps even more delightful. He was loved,—and he was loved by an exquisite being, who was the object of universal admiration. What could he desire more? Nothing but the wilfulness of youth could have induced him for a moment to contemplate breaking chains, which had only been formed to secure his felicity. He determined to bid farewell for ever to the impetuosity of youth. He had not been three days under the roof of Cleve, before he felt that his happiness depended upon its fairest inmate. You see, then, that absence is not always fatal to love!

CHAPTER II.

His Grace completed his stud, and became one of the most distinguished votaries of the turf. Sir Lucius was the inspiring divinity upon this occasion. Our hero, like all young men, and particularly young nobles, did everything in extremes; and extensive arrangements were made by himself and his friend for the ensuing campaign. Sir Lucius was to reap half the profit, and to undertake the whole management. The Duke was to produce the capital, and to pocket the whole glory. Thus rolled on six weeks, at the end of which our hero began to get a little tired. He had long ago recovered all his self-complacency, and if the form of May Dacre ever flitted before his vision for an instant, he clouded it over directly by the apparition of a bet, or thrust it away with that desperate recklessness with which we expel an ungracious thought. The Duke sighed for a little novelty. Christmas was at hand. He began to think that a regular country Christmas must be a sad bore. Lady Afy, too, was rather *exigeante*. It destroys one's nerves to be amiable every day to the same human being. She was the best creature in the world; but Cambridgeshire was not a pleasant county. He was most attached; but there was not another agreeable woman in the house. He would not hurt her feelings for the world; but his own were suffering most desperately. He had no idea that he ever should get so entangled. Brighton, they say, is a pleasant place.

To Brighton he went; and although the Graftons were to follow him in a fortnight, still even these fourteen days were a holiday. It is extraordinary how hourly, and how violently, change the feelings of an inexperienced young man.

Sir Lucius, however, was disappointed in his Brighton trip. Ten days after the departure of the young Duke, the county member died. Sir Lucius had been long maturing his pretensions to the vacant representation. He was strongly supported; for he was a personal favourite, and his family had claims; but he was violently opposed; for a *novus homo* was ambitious, and the Baronet was poor. Sir Lucius was a man of violent passions, and all feelings and considerations immediately merged in his paramount ambition. His wife, too, at this moment, was an important personage. She was generally popular; she was beautiful, highly connected, and highly considered. Her canvassing was a great object. She canvassed with earnestness, and with success; for since her consolatory friendship with the Duke of St. James, her character had greatly changed, and she was now as desirous of

conciliating her husband and the opinion of society, as she was before disdainful of the one, and fearless of the other. Sir Lucius and Lady Aphrodite Grafton were indeed on the best possible terms, and the whole county admired his conjugal attentions, and her wifelike affections.

The Duke, who had no influence in this part of the world, and who was not at all desirous of quitting Brighton, compensated for his absence at this critical moment by a friendly letter, and the offer of his purse. By this good aid, his wife's attractions, and his own talents, Sir Lucy succeeded, and by the time Parliament had assembled, he was returned member for his native county.

In the meantime, his friend had been spending his time at Brighton, in a far less agitated manner; but, in its way, not less successful; for he was amused, and therefore gained his object as much as the Baronet. The Duke liked Brighton much. Without the bore of an establishment, he found himself among many agreeable friends, living in an unostentatious and impromptu, though refined and luxurious style. One day a new face, another day a new dish, another day a new dance, successively interested his feelings, particularly if the face rode, which they all do; the dish was at Sir George Sauceville's; and the dance at the Duke of Burlington's. So time flew on, between a canter to Rottindean, the flavours of a Perigord, and the blunders of the Mazurka.

But February arrived, and this agreeable life must end. The philosophy of society is so practical, that it is not allowed, even to a young Duke, absolutely to trifle away existence. Duties will arise, in spite of our best endeavours; and his Grace had to roll up to town, to dine with the Premier, and to move the Address.

CHAPTER III.

ANOTHER season had arrived,—another of those magical periods of which one had already witnessed his unparalleled triumphs, and from which he had derived such exquisite delight. To his surprise, he viewed its arrival without emotion,—if, with any feeling, with disgust.

He had quaffed the cup too eagerly. The draught had been delicious; the time also proved that it had been satiating. Was it possible for his vanity to be more completely gratified than it had been? Was it possible for victories to be more numerous and more unquestioned during the coming campaign than during the last? Had not his life, then, been one long triumph? Who had not offered their admiration? Who had not paid homage to his all-acknowledged empire? Yet, even this career, however dazzling, had not been pursued, even this success, however brilliant, had not been attained, without some effort, and some weariness, also some exhaustion. Often, as he now remembered, had his head ached; more than once, as now occurred to him, had his heart faltered. Even his first season had not passed over without his feeling lone in the crowded saloon, or starting at the supernatural finger in the banqueting-hall. Yet then he was the creature of excitement, who pursued an end, which was as indefinite as it seemed to be splendid. All had now happened that could happen. He drooped. He required the impulse which we derive from an object unattained.

Yet, had he exhausted life at two-and-twenty? This must not be. His feelings must be more philosophically accounted for. He began to suspect that he had lived too much for the world, and too little for himself; that he had sacrificed his ease to the applause of thousands, and mistaken excitement for enjoyment. His memory dwelt with satisfaction on the hours which had so agreeably glided away at Brighton, in the choice society of a few intimates. He determined entirely to remodel the system of his life; and with the sanguine impetuosity which characterised him, he, at the same moment, felt that he had at length discovered the road to happiness, and determined to pursue it without the loss of a precious moment.

The Duke of St. James was seen less in the world, and he appeared but seldom at the various entertainments which he had once so adorned. Yet he did not resign his exalted position in the world of Fashion; but, on the contrary, adopted a course of conduct which even increased his consideration. He received the world not less frequently, or less splendidly, than heretofore; and

his magnificent mansion, early in the season, was opened to the favoured crowd. Yet in that mansion, which had been acquired with such energy, and at such cost, its Lord was almost as strange, and certainly not as pleased an inmate, as the guests, who felt their presence in his chambers a confirmation or a creation of their claims to the world's homage. The Alhambra was finished, and there the Duke of St. James entirely resided; but its regal splendour was concealed from the prying eye of public curiosity, with a proud reserve, a studied secrecy, and stately haughtiness becoming a caliph. A small band of initiated friends alone had the occasional entrée, and the mysterious air which they provokingly assumed, whenever they were cross-examined on the internal arrangements of this mystical structure, only increased the number and the wildness of the incidents which daily were afloat, respecting the fantastic profusion and scientific dissipation of the youthful sultan and his envied viziers.

The town, ever since the season commenced, had been in feverish expectation of the arrival of a new singer, whose fame had heralded her presence in all the courts of Christendom. Whether she were an Italian or a German, a Gaul or a Greek, was equally unknown. An air of mystery environed the most celebrated creature in Europe. There were odd whispers of her parentage. Every potentate was, in turn, entitled to the gratitude of mankind for the creation of this marvel. Now, it was an emperor—now, it was a king. A grand-duke then put in his claim; and then an archduke. To-day, she was married—to-morrow, she was single. To-day, her husband was a prince incog.—to-morrow, a drum-major, well known. Even her name was a mystery; and she was known and worshipped throughout the whole civilised world by the mere title of "THE BIRD OF PARADISE!"

About a month before Easter, telegraphs announced her arrival. The Admiralty yacht was too late. She determined to make her first appearance at the Opera; and not only the young Duke, but even a far more exalted personage, was disappointed in the sublime idea of anticipating the public opinion by a private concert. She was to appear, for the first time, on Tuesday:—the House of Commons adjourned.

The curtain is drawn up, and the house is crowded. Everybody is there who is anybody. Protocoli, looking as full of fate as if the French were again on the Danube; Macaroni, as full of himself as if no other being were engrossing universal attention. The Premier appears far more anxious than he does at Council; and the Duke of Burlington arranges his fan-like screen with an agitation which, for a moment, makes him forget his unrivalled nonchalance. Even Lady Bloomerly is in suspense; and even

Charles Annesley's heart beats. But, ah! (or rather, bah!) the enthusiasm of Lady de Courcy! Even the very young Guardsman, who paid her Ladyship for her ivory franks by his idle presence,—even he must have felt, callous as those very young Guardsmen are.

Will that bore of a tenor ever finish that provoking Aria, that we have heard so often? How drawlingly he drags on his dull, deafening——

Eccola!

Have you seen the primal dew, ere the sun has lipped the pearl? Have you seen a summer fly, with tinted wings of shifting light, glance in the liquid noontide air? Have you marked a shooting star, or watched a young gazelle at play? Then you have seen nothing fresher, nothing brighter, nothing wilder, nothing lighter, than the girl who stands before you!

She was infinitely small, fair, and bright. Her black hair was braided in Madonnas over a brow like ivory; a deep pure pink spot gave lustre to each cheek. Her features were delicate beyond a dream! her nose quite straight, with a nostril which would have made you crazy, if you had not already been struck with idiotcy, by gazing on her mouth. She a singer! Impossible! She cannot speak. And now we look again, she must sing with her eyes, they are so large and lustrous!

The Bird of Paradise curtsied, as if she shrunk under the overwhelming greeting, and crossed her breast with arms that gleamed like moonbeams, and hands that glittered like stars. This gave time to the cognoscenti to remark her costume, which was ravishing, and to try to see her feet; but they were too small. At last Lord Squib announced, that he had discovered them by a new glass, and described them as a couple of diamond-claws most exquisitely finished.

She moved her head with a faint smile, as if she distrusted her powers, and feared the assembly would be disappointed, and then she shot forth a note, which thrilled through every heart, and nearly cracked the chandelier. Even Lady Fitz-pompey said "Brava!"

As she proceeded, the audience grew quite frantic. It was agreed on all hands, that miracles had recommenced. Each air was only sung to call forth fresh exclamations of "Miracolo!" and encores were as unmerciful as an usurper.

Amid all this rapture, the young Duke was not silent. His box was on the stage; and ever and anon, the syren shot a glance which seemed to tell him, that he was marked out amid this brilliant multitude. Each round of applause, each roar of ravished

senses, only added a more fearful action to the wild purposes which began to flit about his Grace's mind. His imagination was touched. His old passion to be distinguished returned in full force. This creature was strange, mysterious, celebrated. Her beauty, her accomplishments, were as singular and as rare as her destiny and her fame. His reverie absolutely raged: it was only disturbed by her repeated notice, and his returned acknowledgments. He arose in a state of mad excitation,—once more the slave, or the victim, of his intoxicated vanity. He hurried behind the scenes. He congratulated her on her success, her genius, and her beauty; and, to be brief, within a week of her arrival in our metropolis, the Bird of Paradise was fairly caged in the Alhambra.

CHAPTER IV.

HITHERTO the Duke of St. James had been a very celebrated personage; but his fame had been confined to the two thousand Brahmins who constitute the World. His patronage of the Signora extended his celebrity in a manner which he had not anticipated; and he became also the hero of the ten, or twelve, or fifteen millions of Pariahs, for whose existence philosophers have hitherto failed to adduce a satisfactory cause.

The Duke of St. James was now, in the most comprehensive sense of the phrase, a Public Character. Some choice spirits took the hint from the public feelings, and determined to dine on the public curiosity. A Sunday journal was immediately established. Of this epic, our Duke was the hero. His manners, his sayings, his adventures, regularly regaled, on each holy day, the Protestant population of this Protestant empire, who in France or Italy, or even Germany, faint at the sight of a peasantry testifying their gratitude for a day of rest, by a dance or a tune. "Sketches of the Alhambra," "*Soupers*, in the Regent's Park," "The Court of the Caliph," "The Bird-cage," &c. &c. &c., were duly announced, and duly devoured. This journal being solely devoted to the illustration of the life of a single and a private individual, was appropriately entitled "The Universe." Its contributors were eminently successful. Their pure inventions, and impure details, were accepted as the most delicate truth; and their ferocious familiarity with persons with whom they were totally unacquainted, demonstrated, at the same time, their knowledge both of the forms and the personages of polite society.

At the first announcement of this hebdomadal, his Grace was a

little annoyed, and "*Noctes Hautevillienses*" made him fear treason; but when he had read a number, he entirely acquitted any person of a breach of confidence. On the whole, he was amused. A variety of ladies, in time, were introduced, with many of whom the Duke had scarcely interchanged a bow; but the respectable editor was not up to Lady Afy.

If his Grace, however, were soon reconciled to this not very agreeable notoriety, and consoled himself under the activity of his libellers, by the conviction that their prolusions did not even amount to a caricature, he was less easily satisfied with another performance which speedily advanced its claims to public notice.

There is an unavoidable reaction in all human affairs. The Duke of St. James had been so successfully attacked, that it became worth while successfully to defend him, and another Sunday paper appeared, the object of which was to maintain the silver side of the shield. Here everything was *couleur de rose*. One week, the Duke saved a poor man from the Serpentine; another, a poor woman from starvation; now an orphan was grateful; and now Miss Zouch, impelled by her necessity, and his reputation, addressed him a column and a half, quite heart-rending. Parents with nine children; nine children without parents; clergymen most improperly unbeneficed; officers most wickedly reduced; widows of younger sons of quality sacrificed to the Colonies; sisters of literary men sacrificed to national works, which required his patronage to appear; daughters who had known better days, but somehow or other had not been so well acquainted with their parents; all advanced with multiplied petitions, and that hackneyed, heartless air of misery which denotes the Mumper. His Grace was infinitely annoyed, and scarcely compensated for the inconvenience by the prettiest little creature in the world, who one day forced herself into his presence to solicit the honour of dedicating to him her poems.

He had enough upon his hands, so he wrote her a cheque, and with a courtesy which must have made this Sappho quite desperate put her out of the room.

We forgot to say, that the name of the new journal was the "New World." The new world is not quite so big as the universe, but then it is as large as all the other quarters of the globe together. The worst of this business was, the Universe protested that the Duke of St. James, like a second Canning, had called this New World into existence, which was too bad, because, in truth, he deprecated its discovery scarcely less than the Venetians.

Having thus managed, in the course of a few weeks, to achieve the reputation of an unrivalled roué, our hero one night betook

himself to Almack's, a place where his visits, this season, were both shorter and less frequent.

Many an anxious mother gazed upon him, as he passed, with an eye which longed to pierce futurity; many an agitated maiden looked exquisitely unembarrassed, while her fluttering memory feasted on the sweet thought that, at any rate, another had not captured this unrivalled prize. Perhaps she might be the Anson to fall upon this galleon. It was worth a long cruise, and even a chance of a shipwreck.

He danced with Lady Aphrodite, because since the affair of the Signora, he was most punctilious in his attentions to her, particularly in public. That affair, of course, she passed over in silence, though it was bitter. She, however, had had sufficient experience of man to feel that remonstrance is a last resource, and usually an ineffectual one. It was something that her rival—not that her Ladyship dignified the bird by that title—it was something, that she was not her equal, that she was not one with whom she could be put in painful and constant collision. She tried to consider it a freak, to believe only half she heard, and to indulge the fancy, that it was a toy which would soon tire. As for Sir Lucius, he saw nothing in this adventure, or indeed in the Alhambra system at all, which militated against his ulterior views. No one more constantly officiated at the ducal orgies than himself, both because he was devoted to self-gratification, and because he liked ever to have his protégé in sight. He studiously prevented any other individual from becoming the Petronius of the circle. His deep experience also taught him, that with a person of the young Duke's temper, the mode of life which he was now leading was exactly the one which not only would insure, but even hurry the catastrophe his faithful friend so eagerly desired. His pleasures, as Sir Lucius knew, would soon pall; for he easily perceived that the Duke was not heartless enough for a roué. When thorough satiety is felt, young men are in the cue for desperate deeds. Looking upon happiness as a dream, or a prize which, in life's lottery, they have missed—worn, hipped, dissatisfied, and desperate, they often hurry on a result which they disapprove, merely to close a miserable career, or to brave the society with which they cannot sympathise.

The Duke, however, was not yet sated. As after a feast, when we have despatched a quantity of wine, there sometimes, as it were, arises a second appetite, unnatural to be sure, but very keen; so, in a career of dissipation, when our passion for pleasure appears to be exhausted, the fatal fancy of man, like a wearied hare, will take a new turn, throw off the hell-hounds of ennui, and course again with renewed vigour.

And to-night the Duke of St. James was, as he had been for some weeks, all life, and fire, and excitement; and his eye was even now wandering round the room, in quest of some consummate spirit, whom he might summon to his Saracenic Paradise.

A consummate spirit his eye lighted on. There stood May Dacre. He gasped for breath. He turned pale. It was only for a moment, and his emotion was unperceived. There she stood, beautiful as when she first glanced before him;—there she stood, with all her imperial graces; and all surrounding splendour seemed to fade away before her dazzling presence, like mournful spirits of a lower world before a radiant creature of the sky.

She was speaking with her sunlight smile to a young man, whose appearance attracted his notice. He was dressed entirely in black, rather short, but slenderly made; sallow, but clear, with long black curls, and a Murillo face, and looked altogether like a young Jesuit, or a Venetian official by Giorgone or Titian. His countenance was reserved, and his manner not very easy: yet, on the whole, his face indicated intellect, and his figure blood. The features haunted the Duke's memory. He had met this person before. There are some countenances, which, when once seen, can never be forgotten, and the young man owned one of these. The Duke recalled him to his memory with a pang.

Our hero—let him still be ours, for he is rather desolate, and he requires the backing of his friends—our hero behaved pretty well. He seized the first favourable opportunity to catch Miss Dacre's eye, and was grateful for her bow. Emboldened, he accosted her, and asked after Mr. Dacre. She was very courteous, but amazingly unembarrassed. Her calmness, however, piqued him sufficiently to allow him to rally. He was tolerably easy, and talked of calling. Their conversation lasted only for a few minutes, and was fortunately terminated without his withdrawal, which would have been awkward. The young man, whom we have noticed, came up to claim her hand.

"Arundel Dacre, or my eyes deceive me," said the young Duke. "I always consider an old Etonian a friend, and therefore I address you without ceremony."

The young man accepted, but not with great readiness, the offered hand. He blushed, and spoke, but in a hesitating and husky voice. Then he cleared his throat, and spoke again, but not much more to the purpose. Then he looked to his partner, whose eyes were on the ground, and rose as he endeavoured to catch them. For a moment he was silent again; then he bowed slightly to Miss Dacre, and solemnly to the Duke, and then he carried off his cousin.

"Poor Dacre!" said the Duke; "he always had the worst manner in the world. Not in the least changed."

His Grace wandered into the tea-room. A knot of dandies were in deep converse. He heard his own name, and that of the Duke of Burlington; then came "Doncaster Beauty"—"Don't you know?"—"Oh! yes,"—"All quite mad," &c. &c. &c. As he passed, he was invited in different ways to join this coterie of his admirers, but he declined the honour, and passed them with that icy hauteur which he could assume, and which, judiciously used, contributed not a little to his popularity.

He could not conquer his depression; and although it was scarcely past midnight, he determined to disappear. Fortunately his carriage was waiting. He was at a loss what to do with himself. He dreaded even to be alone. The Signora was at a private concert, and she was the last person whom, at this moment, he cared to see. His low spirits rapidly increased. He got terribly nervous, and felt perfectly miserable. At last, he drove to White's.

The House had just broke up, and the political members had just entered, and in clusters, some standing, and some yawning, some stretching their arms, and some stretching their legs, presented symptoms of an escape from boredom. Among others, round the fire, was a young man dressed in a rough great coat all cords and sables, with his hat bent aside, a shawl tied round his neck with great boldness, and a huge oaken staff clenched in his left hand. With the other he held the Courier, and reviewed with a critical eye the report of the speech which he had made that afternoon. This was Lord Darrell.

We have always considered the talents of younger brothers as an unanswerable argument in favour of a Providence. Lord Darrell was the younger son of the Earl of Darleyford, and had been educated for a diplomatist. A report some two years ago had been very current, that his elder brother, then Lord Darrell, was, against the consent of his family, about to be favoured with the hand of Mrs. Dallington Vere. Certain it is, he was a very devoted admirer of that lady. Of that lady, however, a less favoured rival chose one day to say that which staggered the romance of the impassioned youth. In a moment of rashness, impelled by sacred feelings, it is reported, at least, for the whole is a mystery, he communicated what he had heard with horror to the mistress of his destinies. Whatever took place, certain it is Lord Darrell challenged the indecorous speaker, and was shot through the heart. The affair made a great sensation, and the Darleyfords and their connections said bitter things of Mrs. Dallington, and talked much of rash youth and subtle women of discreeter years, and passions shamefully inflamed, and purposes wickedly egged

on. We say nothing of all this; nor will we dwell upon it. Mrs. Dallington Vere assuredly was no slight sufferer. But she conquered the cabal that was formed against her, for the dandies were her friends, and gallantly supported her through a trial under which some women would have sunk. As it was, at the end of the season she did travel, but all is now forgotten; and Hill Street, Berkeley Square, again contains, at the moment of our story, its brightest ornament.

The present Lord Darrell gave up all idea of being an ambassador, but he was clever; and though he hurried to gratify a taste for pleasure which before had been too much mortified, he could not relinquish the ambitious prospects with which he had, during the greater part of his life, consoled himself for his cadetship. He piqued himself upon being, at the same time, a dandy and a statesman. He spoke in the House, and not without effect. He was one of those who make themselves masters of all the great questions, that is to say, who read a great many reviews and newspapers, and are full of others' thoughts, without ever having thought themselves. He particularly prided himself upon having made his way into the Alhambra set. He was the only man of business among them. The Duke liked him,—for it is agreeable to be courted by those who are themselves considered.

Lord Darrell was a great favourite with the women. They like a little intellect. He talked fluently on all subjects. He was what is called "a talented young man." Then he had mind, and soul, and all that. The miracles of creation have long agreed that body without soul will not do; and even a coxcomb in these days must be original, or he is a bore. No longer is such a character the mere creation of his tailor and his perfumer. Lord Darrell was an avowed admirer of Lady Caroline St. Maurice, and a great favourite with her parents, who both considered him an oracle on the subjects which respectively interested them. You might dine at Fitz-pompey House, and hear his name quoted at both ends of the table; by the host, upon the state of Europe, and by the hostess upon the state of the season. Had it not been for the young Duke, nothing would have given Lady Fitz-pompey greater pleasure than to have received him as a son-in-law, but, as it was, he was only kept in store for the second string to Cupid's bow.

Lord Darrell had just quitted the House in a costume which, though rough, was not less studied than the finished and elaborate toilet which, in the course of an hour, he will exhibit in the enchanted halls of Almack's. There he will figure to the last, the most active and the most remarked; and though after these continued exertions, he will not gain his couch perhaps till seven,

our Lord of the Treasury,—for he is one,—will resume his official duties at an earlier hour than any functionary in the kingdom.

Yet our friend is a little annoyed now. What is the matter? He dilates to his uncle, Lord Seymour Temple, a greyheaded placeman, on the profligacy of the press. What is this? The Virgilian line our orator introduced so felicitously is omitted. He panegyrizes the Mirror of Parliament, where he has no doubt the missing verse will appear. The quotation was new—"*Timeo Danaos.*"

Lord Seymour Temple begins a long story about Fox and General Fitzpatrick. This is a signal for a general retreat; and the bore, as Sir Boyle Roche would say, like the last rose of summer, remains talking to himself.

CHAPTER V.

ARUNDEL DACRE was the only child of Mr. Dacre's only and deceased brother, and the heir to the whole of the Dacre property. His father, a man of violent passions, had married early in life, against the approbation of his family, and had revolted from the Catholic communion. The elder brother, however mortified by this great deed, which passion had prompted, and not conscience, had exerted his best offices to mollify their exasperated father, and to reconcile the sire to the son. But he had exerted them ineffectually; and, as is not unusual, found, after much harrowing anxiety and deep suffering, that he was not even recompensed for his exertions and his sympathy, by the gratitude of his brother. The younger Dacre was not one of those minds whose rashness and impetuosity are counterbalanced, or rather compensated, by a generous candour and an amiable remorse. He was headstrong, but he was obstinate: he was ardent, but he was sullen: he was unwary, but he was suspicious. Every one who opposed him was his enemy: all who combined for his preservation were conspirators. His father, whose feelings he had outraged, and never attempted to soothe, was a tyrant; his brother, who was devoted to his interests, was a traitor.

These were his living and his dying thoughts. While he existed, he was one of those men, who, because they have been imprudent, think themselves unfortunate, and mistake their diseased mind for an implacable destiny. When he died, his deathbed was consoled by the reflection, that his persecutors might at last feel some compunction; and he quitted the world without

a pang, because he flattered himself that his departure would cost them one.

His father, who died before him, had left him no fortune, and even had not provided for his wife or child. His brother made another ineffectual attempt to accomplish a reconciliation; but his proffers of love and fortune were alike scorned, and himself insulted; and Arundel Dacre seemed to gloat on the idea, that he was an outcast and a beggar.

Yet even this strange being had his warm feelings. He adored his wife, particularly because his father had disowned her. He had a friend whom he idolised, and who, treating his occasional conduct as a species of insanity, had never deserted him. This friend had been his college companion, and, in the odd chapter of circumstances, had become a powerful political character. Dacre was a man of talents, and his friend took care that he should have an opportunity of displaying them. He was brought into Parliament, and animated by the desire, as he thought, of triumphing over his family, he exerted himself with success. But his infernal temper spoiled all. His active quarrels, and his noisy brawls, were even more endurable than his sullen suspicions, his dark hints, and his silent hate. He was always offended, and always offending. Such a man could never succeed as a politician,—a character who, of all others, must learn to endure, to forget, and to forgive. He was soon universally shunned; but his first friend was faithful, though bitterly tried, and Dacre retired from public life on a pension.

His wife had died, and during the latter years of his life, almost his only companion was his son. He concentrated on this being all that ardent affection, which, had he diffused among his fellow-creatures, might have ensured his happiness and his prosperity. Yet even sometimes he would look in his child's face with an anxious air, as if he read incubating treason, and then press him to his bosom with unusual fervour, as if he would stifle the idea, which alone was madness.

This child was educated in an hereditary hate of the Dacre family. His uncle was daily painted as a tyrant, whom he classed in his young mind with Phalaris or Dionysius. There was nothing that he felt keener than his father's wrongs, and nothing which he believed more certain than his uncle's wickedness. He arrived at his thirteenth year, when his father died, and he was to be consigned to the care of that uncle.

Arundel Dacre had left his son as a legacy to his friend; but that friend was a man of the world; and when the elder brother not only expressed his willingness to maintain the orphan, but even his desire to educate and adopt him as his son, he cheerfully

resigned all his claims to the forlorn boy, and felt that, by consigning him to his uncle, he had most religiously discharged the trust of his confiding friend.

The nephew arrived at Castle Dacre with a heart equally divided between misery and hatred. It seemed to him that a fate more forlorn than his had seldom been awarded to mortal. Although he found his uncle so diametrically opposite to all that his misled imagination had painted him; although he was treated with a kindness and indulgence, which tried to compensate for their too long estranged affections, Arundel Dacre could never conquer the impressions of his boyhood; and had it not been for his cousin, May, a creature of whom he had not heard, and of whom no distorted image had therefore haunted his disturbed imagination,—had it not been for this beautiful girl, who greeted him with affection which warmed and won his heart, so morbid were his feelings, that he would in all probability have pined away under the roof which he should have looked upon as his own.

His departure for Eton was a relief. As he grew up, although his knowledge of life and man had long taught him the fallacy of his early feelings; and although he now yielded a tear of pity, rather than of indignation, to the adored manes of his father, his peculiar temper and his first education never allowed him entirely to emancipate himself from his hereditary feelings. His character was combined of many and even of contrary qualities.

His talents were great, but his want of confidence made them more doubtful to himself than to the world; yet, at times, in his solitary musings, he perhaps even exaggerated his powers. He was proud, and yet worldly. He never forgot that he was a Dacre; but he desired to be the architect of his own fortune; and his very love of independence made him, at an early period, meditate on the means of managing mankind. He was reserved and cold, for his imagination required much; yet he panted for a confidante, and was one of those youths with whom friendship is a passion. To conclude, he was a Protestant among Catholics; and although this circumstance, inasmuch as it assisted him in the views which he had early indulged, was not an ungracious one, he felt that, till he was distinguished, it had lessened his consideration, since he could not count upon the sympathy of hereditary connections and ancient party. Altogether, he was one who, with the consciousness of ancient blood, the certainty of future fortune, fine talents, great accomplishments, and not slight personal advantages, was unhappy. Yet, although not of a sanguine temper, and occasionally delivered to the darkest spleen, his intense ambition sustained him, and he lived on the hope, and sometimes on the conviction, that a bright

era would, some day, console him for the bitterness of his past and present life.

At school and at college he equally distinguished himself, and was everywhere respected and often regarded: yet he had never found that friend on whom his fancy had often busied itself, and which one whose alternations of feeling were so violent, peremptorily required. His uncle and himself viewed each other with mutual respect and regard, but confidence did not exist between them. Mr. Dacre, in spite of his long and constant efforts, despaired of raising in the breast of his nephew the flame of filial love; and had it not been for his daughter, who was the only person in the world to whom Arundel ever opened his mind, and who could, consequently, throw some light upon his wants and wishes, it would not have been in his power to evince to his nephew, that this disappointment had not affected his uncle's feelings in his favour.

When his education was completed, Mr. Dacre had wished him to take up his residence in Yorkshire, and, in every sense, to act as his son, as he was his successor. But Arundel declined this proposition. He obtained from his father's old political connection the appointment of *attaché* to a foreign embassy, and he remained on the Continent, with the exception of a yearly visit to Yorkshire, three or four years. But his views were not in the diplomatic line, and this appointment only served as a political school until he could enter Parliament. May Dacre had wormed from him his secret, and worked with energy in his cause. An opportunity appeared to offer itself, and, under the patronage of a Catholic nobleman, he was to appear as a candidate for an open borough. It was on this business that he had returned to England.

CHAPTER VI.

We will go and make a morning call. The garish light of day, that never suits a chamber, was broken by a muslin veil, which sent its softened twilight through a room of moderate dimensions but of princely decoration, and which opened into a conservatory. The choice saloon was hung with rose-coloured silk, which diffused a delicate tint over the inlaid and costly cabinets. It was crowded with tables, covered with *bijouterie*. Apparently, however, a road had been cut through the furniture, by which you might wind your way up to the divinity of the temple. A ravishing perfume, which was ever changing, wandered through the apartment. Now a violet breeze made you poetical; now a rosy gale called you to love. And ever and anon the strange but thrilling breath of some rare exotic summoned you, like an angel, to opening Eden. All was still and sweet, save that a fountain made you, as it were, more conscious of silence—save that the song of birds made you, as it were, more sensible of sweetness.

Upon a couch, her small head resting upon an arm covered with bracelets, which blazed like a Soldan's treasure, reclined Mrs. Dallington Vere.

She is in thought. Is her abstracted eye fixed in admiration upon that twinkling foot which, clothed in its Russian slipper, looks like a serpent's tongue, small, red, and pointed; or does a more serious feeling than self-admiration inspire this musing? Ah! a cloud courses over that pellucid brow. 'Tis gone, but it frowned like the harbinger of a storm. Again! A small but blood-red blush rises into that clear cheek. It was momentary, but its deep colour indicated that it came from the heart. Her eye lights up with a wild and glittering fire, but the flash vanishes into darkness, and gloom follows the unnatural light. She clasps her hands; she rises from an uneasy seat, though supported by a thousand pillows, and she paces the conservatory.

A guest is announced. It is Sir Lucius Grafton.

He salutes her with that studied courtesy, which shows they are only friends, but which, when maintained between intimate acquaintance, sometimes makes wicked people suspect, that they once perhaps were more. She resumes her seat, and he throws himself into an easy chair which is opposite.

"Your note I this moment received, Bertha, and I am here. You perceive that my fidelity is as remarkable as ever."

"We had a gay meeting last night."

"Very much so. So, Lady Araminta has at last shown mercy."

"I cannot believe it."

"I have just had a note from Challoner, preliminary, I suppose, to my trusteeship. You are not the only person who hold my talents for business in high esteem."

"But Ballingford——what will he say?"

"That is his affair; and as he never, to my knowledge, spoke to the purpose, his remarks now, I suppose, are not fated to be much more apropos."

"Yet he can say things. We all know——"

"Yes, yes, we all know, but nobody believes. That is the motto of the present day; and the only way to neutralise scandal, and to counteract publicity."

Mrs. Dallington was silent, and looked a little uneasy; and her friend perceiving, that although she had sent to him so urgent a billet, she did not communicate, expressed a little surprise.

"But you wish to see me, Bertha?"

"I do very much, and to speak to you. For these many days, I have intended it; but I do not know how it is, I have postponed and postponed our interview. I begin to believe," she added, looking up with a faint smile, "I am half afraid to speak."

"Good God!" said the Baronet, really alarmed, "you are in no trouble!"

"Oh, no! make yourself easy. Trouble—trouble! No—no! I am not exactly in trouble. I am not in debt; I am not in a scrape; but—but—but I am in something—something worse, perhaps—I am in love."

The Baronet looked puzzled. He did not for a moment suspect himself to be the hero; yet, although their mutual confidence was illimitable, he did not exactly see why, in the present instance, there had been such urgency to impart an event not altogether either unnatural or miraculous.

"In love!" said Sir Lucius; "a very proper situation for the prettiest woman in London. Everybody is in love with you; and I heartily rejoice that some one of our favoured sex is about to avenge our sufferings."

"*Point de moquerie*, Lucy! I am very miserable."

"Dear little pigeon, what is the matter?"

"Ah! me!"

"Speak, speak," said he, in a gay tone; "you were not made for sighs, but smiles. Begin——"

"Well, then—the young Duke——"

"The devil!" said Sir Lucius, alarmed.

"Oh! no! make yourself easy," said Mrs. Dallington, smiling; "no counterplot, I assure you, although really you do not deserve to succeed."

"Then, who is it?" eagerly asked Sir Lucius.

"You will not let me speak. The young Duke——"

"Damn the Duke!"

"How impatient you are, Lucy! I must begin with the beginning. Well, the young Duke has something to do with it."

"Pray be explicit."

"In a word, then," said Mrs. Dallington, in a low voice, but with an expression of earnestness which Sir Lucius had never before remarked, "I am in love, desperately in love, with one whom hitherto, in accordance with your wishes, I have been driving into the arms of another. Our views, our interests are opposite; but I wish to act fairly, if possible,—I wish to reconcile them; and it is for this purpose that I have summoned you this morning."

"Arundel Dacre!" said Sir Lucius quietly, and he rapped his cane on his boot. The blood-red spot again rose in his companion's cheek.

There was silence for a moment. Sir Lucius would not disturb it, and Mrs. Dallington again spoke.

"St. James and the little Dacre have again met. You have my secret. I do not ask your—which I might at another time—I do not ask your good services with Arundel; but you cannot expect me to work against myself. Depend, then, no longer on my influence with May Dacre; for to be explicit, as we have always been, most heartily should I rejoice to see her a duchess."

"The point, Bertha," said Sir Lucius, very quietly, "is not that I can no longer count upon you as an ally: but I must, I perceive, reckon you an opponent."

"Cannot we prevent this?" asked Mrs. Dallington with energy.

"I see no alternative," said Sir Lucius, shaking his head with great unconcern. "Time will prove who will have to congratulate the other."

"My friend," said Mrs. Dallington, with briskness and decision, "no affectation between us. Drop this assumed unconcern. You know—you know well, that no incident could occur to you at this moment more mortifying than the one I have communicated, which deranges your plans, and probably may destroy your views. You cannot misconceive my motives in making this, not very agreeable, communication. I might have pursued my object without your knowledge and permission. In a word, I might have betrayed you. But with me, every consideration has yielded to friendship. I cannot forget how often, and how successfully, we have combined. I should grieve to see our ancient and glorious alliance annulled. I am yet in hopes that we may both obtain our objects through its medium."

"I am not aware," said Sir Lucius, with more feeling, "that I have given you any cause to complain of my want of candour. We are in a difficult position. I have nothing to suggest, but I am ready to listen. You know how ready I am to adopt all your suggestions; and I know how seldom you have wanted an expedient."

"The little Dacre, then, must not marry her cousin: but we cannot flatter ourselves that such a girl will not want to marry some one:—I have a conviction that this is her decisive season. She must be occupied. In a word, Lucy, some one must be found."

The Baronet started from his chair, and nearly knocked down a table.

"Confound your tables, Bertha," said he, in a pettish tone, "I can never consult in a room full of tables." He walked into the conservatory, and she followed him. He seemed plunged in thought. They were again silent. Suddenly he seized her hand, and led her back to the sofa, on which they both sat down.

"My dear friend," he said, in a tone of agitated solemnity, "I will conceal no longer from you what I have sometimes endeavoured to conceal from myself,——I love that girl to distraction."

"You!"

"Yes! to distraction. Ever since we first met, her image has haunted me. I endeavoured to crush a feeling, which promised only to plunge me into anxiety, and to distract my attention from my important objects; but in vain, in vain. Her unexpected appearance yesterday has revived my passion with triple fervour. I have passed a sleepless night, and rise with the determination to obtain her."

"You know your own power, Lucius, better perhaps than I do, or the world. We rank it high—none higher—yet nevertheless, I look upon this declaration as insanity."

He raised her hand to his lips, and pressed it with delicate warmth, and summoned his most insinuating tone. "With your aid, Bertha, I should not despair!"

"Lucy, I am your friend, perhaps your best friend,—but these Dacres. Would it were any one but a Dacre! No, no, this cannot be."

"Bertha, you know me *better* than the world—I am a roué; and you—are my friend; but, believe me, I am not quite so vain as to indulge for a moment in the idea, that May Dacre should be aught to me but what all might approve, and all might honour. Yes, I intend her for my wife."

"Your wife! You are, indeed, premature."

"Not quite so premature as you perhaps imagine. Know, then,

that the great point is on the eve of achievement. Urged by the information which she thinks she unconsciously obtains from Lachen, and harrowed by the idea that I am about to tear her from England, she has appealed to the Duke in a manner to which they were both unused. Hitherto, her docile temper has not permitted her to abuse her empire. Now, she exerts her power with an energy to which he believed her a stranger. He is staggered by his situation. He at the same time repents having so rashly engaged the feelings of a woman, and is flattered that he is so loved. They have more than once consulted upon the expediency of an elopement."

"This is good news."

"O! Bertha, you must feel like me, before you can estimate it. Yes!" he clenched his fist with horrible energy,—"there is no hell like a detested wife!"

They were again silent; but when she thought that his emotion had subsided, she again recalled their consideration to the object of their interview.

"You play a bold game, indeed; but it shall not fail from any deficiency on my part. But how are we to proceed at present? Who is to interest the feelings of the little Dacre at once?"

"Who but her future husband? What I want you to do is this:—we shall call; but prepare the house to receive us not only as acquaintances, but as desirable intimates. You know what to say. I have an idea, that the divine creature entertains no very unfavourable opinion of your obedient slave; and with her temper, I care not for what she will not probably hear,—the passing opinion of a third person. I stand at present, thanks to Afy, very high with the public; and you know, although my life has not the least altered, that my indiscretions have now a dash of discretion in them; and a reformed rake, as all agree, is the personification of morality. Prepare my way with the Dacres, and all will go right. And as for this Arundel, I know him not; but you have told me enough to make me consider him the most fortunate of men. As for love between cousins, I laugh at it. A glance from you will extinguish the feeble flame, as a sunbeam does a fire: and for the rest, the world does me the honour to believe, that, if Lucius Grafton be remarkable for one thing more than another, it is for the influence he attains over young minds. I will get acquainted with this boy; and, for once, let love be unattended by doubt."

Long was their counsel. The plans we have hinted at were analysed, canvassed, weighed, and finally matured. They parted after a long morning, well aware of the difficulties which awaited their fulfilment, but also full of hope.

CHAPTER VII.

Such able and congenial spirits as Mrs. Dallington Vere and Sir Lucius Grafton prosecuted their plans with the success which they had a right to anticipate. Lady Aphrodite, who was proud of her previous acquaintance, however slight, with the most distinguished girl in London, and eager to improve it, unconsciously assisted their operations. Society is so constituted, that it requires no little talent, and no slight energy, to repel the intimacy even of those whose acquaintance is evidently not desirable; and there are many people in this world mixing, apparently, with great spirit and self-esteem, in its concerns, who really owe their constant appearance, and occasional influence, in circles of consideration, to no other qualities than their own callous impudence, and the indolence and the irresolution of their victims. They, who at the same time have no delicacy and no shame, count fearful odds: and, much as is murmured about the false estimation of riches, there is little doubt that the parvenu as often owes his, or rather her, advancement in society to her perseverance, as to her pelf.

When, therefore, your intimacy is courted by those whose intimacy is an honour, and that, too, with an art which conceals its purpose, you often find that you have, and are, a devoted friend, really before you have felt sufficient gratitude for the opera-box which has been so often lent, the carriage which has been ever at hand, the brother who has received such civilities, or the father who has been requested to accept some of the very unattainable tokay, which he has charmed you by admiring at your own table.

The manœuvres and tactics of society are infinitely more numerous, and infinitely finer, than those of strategy. Woe betide the rash knight, who dashes into the thick of the polished melée without some slight experience of his barb and his lance! Let him look to his arms! He will do well not to appear before his helm be plumed with some reputation, however slight. He may be very rich, or even very poor. We have seen that answer with a Belisarius like air; and more than one hero without an obolus has stumbled upon a fortune, merely from his contempt of riches. If to fight, or write, or dress, be above you, why, then, you can ride, or dance, or even skate; but do not think, as many young gentlemen are apt to believe, that *talking* will serve your purpose. That is the quicksand of your young beginners. All can talk in a public assembly, that is to say, all can give us exhortations which do not move, and arguments which do not convince; but to converse in a private assembly is a very different affair, and rare are the charac-

ters who can be endured, if they exceed a whisper to their neighbours. But though mild and silent, be ever ready with the rapier of repartee, and be ever armed with the breastplate of good temper. You will infallibly gather laurels, if you add to these the spear of sarcasm, and the shield of nonchalance.

The high style of conversation where eloquence and philosophy emulate each other, where principles are profoundly expounded, and felicitously illustrated, all this has ceased. It ceased in this country with Johnson and Burke, and it requires a Johnson and a Burke for its maintenance. There is no mediocrity in such discourse,—no intermediate character between the sage and the bore. The second style, where men, not things, are the staple, but where wit, and refinement, and sensibility, invest even personal details with intellectual interest, does flourish at present, as it always must in a highly civilised society. S. is, or rather was, a fine specimen of this school, and M. and L. are his worthy rivals. This style is indeed, for the moment, very interesting. Then comes your conversation man, who, we confess, is our aversion. His talk is a thing apart, got up before he enters the company from whose conduct it should grow out. He sits in the middle of a large table, and, with a brazen voice, bawls out his anecdotes, about Sir Thomas, or Sir Humphry, Lord Blank, or my Lady Blue. He is incessant, yet not interesting; ever varying, yet always monotonous. Even if we are amused, we are no more grateful for the entertainment, than we are to the lamp over the table, for the light which it universally sheds, and to yield which, it was obtained on purpose. We are more gratified by the slight conversation of one who is often silent, but who speaks from his momentary feelings, than by all this hullaballoo. Yet this machine is generally a favourite piece of furniture with the hostess. You may catch her eye, as he recounts some adventure of the morning, which proves that he not only belongs to every club, but goes to them, light up with approbation; and then, when the ladies withdrew, and the female senate deliver their criticism upon the late actors, she will observe, with a gratified smile, to her confidante, that the dinner went off well, and that Mr. Bellow was very strong to-day!

All this is horrid, and the whole affair is a delusion. A variety of people are brought together, who all come as late as possible, and retire as soon, merely to show they have other engagements. A dinner is prepared for them, which is hurried over, in order that a certain number of dishes should be—not tasted, but seen: and provided that there is no moment that an absolute silence reigns; provided that, besides the bustling of the servants, the clattering of the plates and knives, a stray anecdote is told, which, if good, has been heard before, and which, if new, is generally flat; pro-

vided a certain number of certain names of people of consideration are introduced, by which some stranger, for whom the party is often secretly given, may learn the scale of civilisation of which he this moment forms a part; provided the senators do not steal out too soon to the House, and their wives to another party,—the hostess is congratulated on the success of her entertainment.

And this glare, and heat, and noise—this congeries of individuals without sympathy, and dishes without flavour—this is society! What an effect without a cause! A man must be very green, indeed, to stand this for two seasons. One cannot help thinking, that one consequence of the increased intelligence of the present day will be a great change in the habits of our intercourse.

To our tale—we linger. Few who did not know too much of Sir Lucius Grafton could refrain from yielding him their regard when he chose to challenge it, and with the Dacres he was soon an acknowledged favourite. As a new M.P., and hitherto doubtful supporter of the Catholic cause, it was grateful to Mr. Dacre's feelings to find in him an ally, and flattering to Mr. Dacre's judgment, when that ally ventured to consult him on his friendly operations. With Miss Dacre, he was a mild, amiable man, who knew the world; thoroughly good, but void of cant, and owner of a virtue not less to be depended on because his passions had once been strong, and he had once indulged them. His experience of life made him value domestic felicity; because he knew that there was no other source of happiness which was at once so pure and so permanent. But he was not one of those men who consider marriage as an extinguisher of all those feelings and accomplishments which throw a lustre on existence; and he did not consider himself bound, because he had plighted his faith to a beautiful woman, immediately to terminate the very conduct which had induced her to join him in the sacred and eternal pledge. His gaiety still sparkled, his wit still flashed: still he hastened to be foremost among the courteous: and still his high and ready gallantry indicated that he was not prepared to yield the fitting ornament of his still blooming youth. A thousand unobtrusive and delicate attentions which the innocent now received from him without a thought, save of Lady Aphrodite's good fortune; a thousand gay and sentimental axioms, which proved not only how agreeable he was, but how enchanting he must have been; a thousand little deeds which struggled to shun the light, and which palpably demonstrated that the gaiety of his wit, the splendour of his accomplishments, and the tenderness of his soul, were only equalled by his unbounded generosity and unparalleled good temper,—all these combined had made Sir Lucius Grafton, to many, always a delightful, often a dangerous, and sometimes a fatal, companion. He was one of

those whose candour is deadly. It was when he least endeavoured to conceal his character that its hideousness least appeared. He confessed sometimes so much, that you yielded that pity, which, ere the shrived culprit could receive, by some fatal alchymy was changed into passion. His smile was a lure, his speech was a spell; but it was when he was silent, and almost gloomy, when you caught his serious eye, charged, as it were, with passion, gazing on yours, that if you had a guardian sylph you should have invoked its aid: and we pray, if ever you meet the man of whom we write, your invocation may not be forgotten, or be, what is more likely—too late.

The Dacres, this season, were the subject of universal conversation. She was the distinguished beauty, and the dandies all agreed that his dinner was worthy of his daughter. Lady Fitz-pompey was not behind the welcoming crowd. She was too politic a leader not to feel anxious to enlist under her colours a recruit who was so calculated to maintain the reputation of her forces. Fitz-pompey House must not lose its character for assembling the most distinguished, the most agreeable, and the most refined,—and May Dacre was a divinity who would summon many a crowd to her niche in this Pantheon of Fashion.

If any difficulty were for a moment anticipated in bringing about this arrangement, a fortunate circumstance seemed sufficient to remove it. Lord St. Maurice and Arundel Dacre had been acquainted at Vienna, and though the intimacy was slight, it was sweet. St. Maurice had received many favours from the *attaché*, and as he was a man of family and reputation, had been very happy to greet him on his arrival in London. Before the Dacres made their appearance in town for the season, Arundel had been initiated in the mysteries of Fitz-pompey House, and therefore a desire from that mansion to cultivate the good graces of his Yorkshire relations seemed not only not forced, but extremely natural. So, the families met, and, to the surprise of each other, became even intimate,— for May Dacre and Lady Caroline soon evinced a mutual regard for each other. Female friendships are of rapid growth, and in the present instance, when there was nothing on either side which was not loveable, it was quite miraculous, and the friendship, particularly on the part of Lady Caroline, shot up in one night, like a blooming aloe.

Perhaps there is nothing more lovely than the love of two beautiful women, who are not envious of each other's charms. How delightfully they impart to each other the pattern of a cap, or flounce, or frill! how charmingly they entrust some slight, slender secret about tinting a flower, or netting a purse! Now, one leans over the other, and guides her inexperienced hand, as it moves in

the mysteries of some novel work, and then the other looks up with an eye beaming with devotion; and then again the first leans down a little lower, and gently presses her aromatic lips upon her friend's polished forehead. These are sights which we quiet men, who, like "small Jack Horner," know where to take up a safe position, occasionally enjoy, but which your noisy fellows, who think that women never want to be alone—a sad mistake—and consequently must be always breaking or stringing a guitar, or cutting a pencil, or splitting a crow quill, or overturning the gold ink, or scribbling over a pattern, or doing any other of the thousand acts of mischief, are debarred from.

Not that these bright flowers often bloomed alone—a blossom not less brilliant generally shared with them the same parterre. Mrs. Dallington completed the bouquet, and Arundel Dacre was the butterfly, who, she was glad to perceive, was seldom absent when her presence added beauty to the beautiful. Indeed, she had good reason to feel confidence in her attractions. Independently of her charms, which assuredly were great, her fortune, which was even greater, possessed, she was well aware, no slight allurement to one who ever trembled when he thought of his dependence, and often glowed when he mused over his ambition. His slight but increasing notice was duly estimated by one who was perfectly acquainted with his peculiar temper, and daily perceived how disregardful he was of all others, except her and his cousin. But a cousin! She felt perfect confidence in the theory of Sir Lucius Grafton.

And the young Duke—have we forgotten him? Sooth to say, he was very seldom with our heroine or heroines. He had called on Mr. Dacre, and had greeted him with marked cordiality, and he had sometimes met him and his daughter in society. But although invited, he had hitherto avoided being their visitor; and the comparatively secluded life which he now led prevented him from seeing them often at other houses. Mr. Dacre, who was unaware of what had passed between him and his daughter, thought his conduct inexplicable; but his former guardian remembered, that it was not the first time that his behaviour had been unusual, and it was never the disposition of Mr. Dacre to promote explanations.

Our hero felt annoyed at his own weakness. It would have been infinitely more worthy of so celebrated, so unrivalled a personage as the Duke of St James, not to have given the woman who had rejected him this evidence of her power. According to etiquette, he should have called there daily, and have dined there weekly, and yet never have given the former object of his adoration the slightest idea that he cared a breath for her presence. According to etiquette, he should never have addressed her but in

a vein of *persiflage*, and with a smile, which indicated his perfect heartease, and her bad taste. According to etiquette, he should have flirted with every woman in her company, rode with her in the Park, walked with her in the Gardens, chatted with her at the Opera, and drank wine with her at a water party; and finally, to prove how sincere he was in his former estimation of her judgment, have consulted her on the presents which he should make to some intimate friend of hers, whom he announces as his future bride. This is the way to manage a woman; and the result may be conceived. She stares, she starts, she sighs, she weeps; feels highly offended at her friend daring to accept him; writes a letter of rejection herself to the affianced damsel, which she makes him sign, and then presents him with the hand which she always meant to be his.

But this was above our hero. The truth is, whenever he thought of May Dacre, his spirit sank. She had cowed him; and her arrival in London had made him as dissatisfied with his present mode of life, as he had been with his former career. They had met again, and under circumstances apparently, to him, the most unfavourable. Although he was hopeless, yet he dreaded to think what she might hear of him. Her contempt was bitter; her dislike would even be worse. Yet it seemed impossible to retrieve. He was plunged deeper than he imagined. Embarrassed, entangled, involved, he flew to Lady Afy, half in pique, and half in misery. Passion had ceased to throw a glittering veil around this idol; but she was kind, and pure, and gentle, and devoted. It was consoling to be loved, to one who was so wretched. It seemed to him, that life must ever be a blank without the woman who, a few months ago, he had felt an encumbrance. The recollection of past happiness was balm to one who was so forlorn. He shuddered at the thought of losing his only precious possession, and he was never more attached to his mistress, than when the soul of friendship rose from the body of expired love.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Duke of St. James dines to-day with Mr. Annesley. Men and things should be our study: and it is universally acknowledged that a dinner is the most important of affairs, and a dandy the most important of individuals. If we liked, we could give you a description of the fête, which should make all your mouths water,—but

every one cooks now, and ekes out his page by robbing Jarvis, and by rifling Ude.

Charles Annesley was never seen to more advantage than when a host. Then his superciliousness would, if not vanish, at least subside. He was not less calm, but somewhat less cold, like a summer lake. Therefore we will have an eye upon his party; because, to dine with dandies should be a prominent feature in your career, and must not be omitted in this sketch of the "Life and Times" of our young hero.

The party was of that number which at once secures a variety of conversation, and the impossibility of two persons speaking at the same time. The guests were—his Grace, Lord Squib, and Lord Darrell.

The repast, like everything connected with Mr. Annesley, was refined and exquisite, rather slight than solid, and more novel than various. There was no affectation of *gourmandise*, the vice of male dinners. Your imagination and your sight were not at the same time dazzled and confused by an agglomeration of the peculiar luxuries of every clime and every season. As you mused over a warm and sunny flavour of a brown soup, your host did not dilate upon the milder and moonlight beauties of a white one. A gentle dallying with a whiting—that chicken of the ocean—was not a signal for a panegyric of the darker attraction of a *matelotte à la royale*. The disappearance of the first course did not herald a catalogue of discordant dainties. You were not recommended to neglect the *croquettes*, because the *boudins* might claim attention; and while you were crowning your important labours with a quail, you were not reminded that the *paté de Troyes*, unlike the less reasonable human race, would feel offended if it were not cut. Then the wines were few. Some sherry, with a pedigree like an Arabian, heightened the flavour of the dish, not interfered with it; as a Toadey keeps up the conversation, which he does not distract. A goblet of Graffenburg, with a bouquet like woman's breath, made you, as you remembered some liquid which it had been your fate to fall upon, suppose that German wines, like German barons, required some discrimination, and that hock, like other titles, was not always the sign of the high nobility of its owner. A glass of claret was the third grace. But if we had been there, we should have devoted ourselves to one of the sparkling sisters; for one wine, like one woman, is sufficient to interest one's feelings for four-and-twenty hours. Fickleness we abhor.

"I observed you riding to-day with the gentle Leonora, St. James," said Mr. Annesley.

"No! her sister."

"Indeed! Those girls are uncommonly alike. The fact is now, that neither face nor figure depends upon nature."

"No," said Lord Squib; "all that the artists of the present day want is a model. Let a family provide one handsome sister, and the hideousness of the others will not prevent them, under good management, from being mistaken, by the best judges, for the beauty six times in the same hour."

"You are trying, I suppose, to account for your unfortunate error at Cleverley's, on Monday, Squib," said Lord Darrell, laughing.

"Pooh! pooh! all nonsense."

"What was it?" said Mr. Annesley.

"Not a word true," said Lord Squib, stifling curiosity.

"I believe it," said the Duke, without having heard a syllable. "Come Darrell, out with it!"

"It really is nothing very particular,—only, it is whispered, that Squib said something to Lady Cleverley, which made her ring the bell, and that he excused himself to his Lordship by protesting, that from their similarity of dress and manner, and strong family likeness, he had mistaken the Countess for her sister."

Omnes. "Well done, Squib! And were you introduced to the right person?"

"Why," said his Lordship, "fortunately, I contrived to fall out about the settlements, and so I escaped."

"So the chaste Diana is to be the new patroness?" said Lord Darrell.

"So I understand," rejoined Mr. Annesley. "This is the age of unexpected appointments."

"*On dit*, that when it was notified to the party most interested, there was a rider to the bill, excluding my Lord's relations."

"Ha, ha, ha," faintly laughed Mr. Annesley.—"What have they been doing so remarkable?"

"Nothing," said Lord Squib. "That is just their fault. They have every recommendation: but when any member of that family is in a room, everybody feels so exceedingly sleepy, that they all sink to the ground. That is the reason that there are so many ottomans at Heavyside House."

"Is it true," asked the Duke, "that his Grace really has a flapper?"

"Unquestionably," said Lord Squib. "The other day I was announced, and his attendant was absent. He had left his instrument on a sofa. I immediately took it up, and touched my Lord up on his hump. I never knew him more entertaining. He really was quite lively."

"But Diana is a favourite goddess of mine," said Annesley,—"taste that hock."

"Superb! Where did you get it?"

"A present from poor Raffenburg."

"Ah! where is he now?"

"At Paris, I believe."

"Paris! and where is she?"

"I liked Raffenburg," said Lord Squib; "he always reminded me of a country innkeeper who supplies you with pipes and tobacco gratis, provided that you will dine with him."

"He had unrivalled meerschaums," said Mr. Annesley, "and he was most liberal. There are two.—You know, I never use them,—but they are handsome furniture."

"Those Dalmaines are fine girls," said the Duke of St. James.

"Very pretty creatures! Do you know, Duke," said Annesley, "I think the youngest one something like Miss Dacre."

"Indeed! I cannot say the resemblance struck me."

"I see old mother Dalmaine dresses her as much like the Doncaster belle as she possibly can."

"Yes, and spoils her," said Lord Squib; "but old mother Dalmaine, with all her fuss, was ever a bad cook, and overdid everything."

"Young Dalmaine, they say," observed Lord Darrell, "is in a sort of a scrape."

"Ah! what?"

"Oh! some confusion at head-quarters. A great tallow-chandler's son got into the regiment, and committed some heresy at mess."

"I do not know the brother," said the Duke.

"You are very fortunate, then. He is unendurable. To give you an idea of him—suppose you met him here (which you never will), he would write to you the next day, 'My dear St. James.'"

"My tailor presented me his best compliments, the other morning," said the Duke.

"The world is growing too familiar," said Mr. Annesley.

"There must be some great remedy," said Lord Darrell.

"Yes!" said Lord Squib, with indignation. "Tradesmen, now-a-days, console themselves for not getting their bills paid, by asking their customers to dinner."

"It is very shocking," said Mr. Annesley, with a forlorn air: "do you know, I never enter society now, without taking as many preliminary precautions as if the plague raged in all our cham-

bers. In vain have I hitherto prided myself on my existence being unknown to the million. I never now stand still in a street, lest my portrait be caught for a lithograph; I never venture to a strange dinner, lest I should stumble upon a fashionable novelist: and even with all this vigilance, and all this denial, I have an intimate friend whom I cannot cut, and who, they say, writes for the Court Journal."

"But why cannot you cut him?" asked Lord Darrell.

"He is my brother; and, you know, I pride myself upon my domestic feelings."

"Yes!" said Lord Squib, "to judge from what the world says, one would think, Annesley, you were a Brummell!"

"Squib, not even in jest couple my name with one whom I will not call a savage, merely because he is unfortunate."

"What did you think of little Eugenie, Annesley, last night?" asked the Duke.

"Very well—very well, indeed—something like Brocard's worst."

"I was a little disappointed in her début, and much interested in her success. She was rather a favourite of mine at Paris, so I invited her to the Alhambra yesterday, with Claudius Piggott and some more. I had half a mind to pull you in, but I know you do not much admire Piggott."

"On the contrary, I have been in Piggott's company without being very much offended."

"I think Piggott improves," said Lord Darrell. "It was those waistcoats which excited such a prejudice against him, when he first came over."

"What! a prejudice against Peacock Piggott!" said Lord Squib—"pretty Peacock Piggott! Tell it not in Gath, whisper it not in Ascalon; and, above all, insinuate it not to Lady de Courcy."

"There is not much danger of my insinuating anything to her," said Mr. Annesley.

"Your compact, I hope, is religiously observed," said the Duke.

"Yes—very well. There was a slight infraction once, but I sent Charles Fitzroy as an ambassador, and war was not declared."

"Do you mean," asked Lord Squib, "when your cabriolet broke down before her door, and she sent out to request that you would make yourself quite at home?"

"I mean that fatal day," replied Mr. Annesley. "I afterwards discovered she had bribed my Tiger."

"Do you know Eugenie's sister, St. James?" asked Lord Darrell.

"Yes: she is very clever indeed; very popular at Paris. But I like Eugenie, because she is so good-natured. Her laugh is so hearty."

"So it is," said Lord Squib. "Do you remember that girl at Madrid, Annesley, who used to laugh so?"

"What, Isidora? She is coming over."

"But I thought it was high treason to plunder the grandees' dovecotes?"

"Why, all our regular official negotiations have failed. She is not permitted to treat with a foreign manager; but the new Ambassador has a secretary, and that secretary has some diplomatic ability, and so—Isidora is to be smuggled over."

"In a red box, I suppose," said Lord Squib.

"I rather admire our Adele," said the Duke of St. James. "I really think she dances with more *aplomb* than any of them."

"Oh! certainly; she is a favourite of mine."

"But I like that wild little Ducis," said Lord Squib. "She puts me in mind of a wild cat."

"And Marunia, of a Bengal tiger," said his Grace.

"She is a fine woman, though," said Lord Darrell.

"I think your cousin, St. James," said Lord Squib, "will get into a scrape with Marunia. I remember Chetwynd telling me—and he was not apt to complain on that score—that he never should have broken up, if it had not been for her."

"But he was a most extravagant fellow," said Mr. Annesley: "he called me in at his *bouleversement* for advice, as I have the reputation of a good economist. I do not know how it is, though I see these things perpetually happen; but why men, and men of small fortunes, should commit such follies, really exceeds my comprehension. Ten thousand pounds for trinkets, and nearly as much for old furniture!"

"Chetwynd kept it up a good many years, though, I think," said Lord Darrell. "I remember going to see his rooms, when I first came over. You recollect his Pearl fountain of Cologne water?"

"Millecolonnes fitted up his place, I think?" asked the young Duke; "but it was before my time."

"Oh! yes, little Bijou," said Annesley. "He has done you justice, Duke. I think the Alhambra much the prettiest thing in town."

"I was attacked the other day most vigorously by Mrs. Dallington to obtain a sight," said Lord Squib. "I referred her to Lucy Grafton. Do you know, St. James, I have half a strange idea, that there is a renewal in that quarter?"

"So they say," said the Duke; "if so, I confess I am sur-

prised." But they remembered Lord Darrell, and the conversation turned.

"Those are clever horses of Lincoln Graves," said Mr. Annesley.

"Neat cattle, as Bagshot says," observed Lord Squib.

"Is it true that Bag is going to marry one of the Wrekins?" asked the Duke.

"Which?" asked Lord Squib; "not Sophy, surely? I thought she was to be your cousin. I dare say," he added, "a false report. I suppose, to use a Bagshotism, his governor wants it; but I should think Lord Cub would not yet be taken in. By-the-bye, he says you have promised to propose him at White's, St. James."

"Oppose him, I said," rejoined the Duke. "Bag really never understands English. However, I think it as probable that he will lounge there as on the Treasury bench. That was his 'governor's' last shrewd plan."

"Darrell," said Lord Squib, "is there any chance of my being a Commissioner for anything? It struck me last night, that I had never been in office."

"I do not think, Squib, that you ever will be in office, if even you be appointed."

"On the contrary, my good fellow, my punctuality should surprise you. I should like very much to be a lay-lord, because I cannot afford to keep a yacht, and theirs, they say, are not sufficiently used, for the Admirals think it spooney, and the landlubbers are always sick."

"I think myself of sporting a yacht this summer," said the Duke of St. James. "Be my captain, Squib."

"Agreed! If you be serious I will commence my duties to-morrow."

"I am serious. I think it will be rather amusing. I give you full authority to do exactly what you like, provided, in two months' time, I have the crack vessel in the club."

"I begin to press. Annesley, your dinner is so good, that you shall be purser; and Darrell, you are a man of business,—you shall be his clerk. For the rest, I think St. Maurice may claim a place, and——"

"Peacock Piggott, by all means," said the Duke. "A gay sailor is quite the thing."

"And Charles Fitzroy," said Annesley, "because I am under obligations to him, and promised to have him in my eye."

"And Bagshot for a butt," said the Duke.

"And Backbite for a buffoon," said Mr. Annesley.

"And for the rest," said the young Duke, "the rest of the crew I vote, shall be women. The Dalmaines will just do."

"And the little Trevors," said Lord Darrell.

"And Long Harrington," said Lord Squib. "She is my beauty."

"And the young Ducie," said Annesley. "And Mrs. Dallington of course, and Caroline St. Maurice, and Charlotte Bloomerly; really, she was dressed most prettily last night; and, above all, the Queen Bee of the hive—May Dacre, eh! St. James? And I have another proposition," said Annesley, with unusual animation. "May Dacre won the St. Leger, and ruled the course; and May Dacre shall win the cup, and rule the waves. Our yacht shall be christened by the Lady Bird of Yorkshire."

"What a delightful thing it would be," said the Duke of St. James, "if, throughout life, we might always choose our crew; cull the beauties, and banish the bores."

"But that is impossible," said Lord Darrell. "Every ornament of society is counterbalanced by some accompanying blur. I have invariably observed, that the ugliness of a chaperon is exactly in proportion to the charms of her charge; and that if a man be distinguished for his wit, his appearance, his style, or any other good quality, he is sure to be saddled with some family or connection, who require all his popularity to gain them a passport into the crowd."

"One might collect a very unexceptionable coterie from our present crowd," said Mr. Annesley. "It would be curious to assemble all the pet lambs of the flock."

"Is it impossible?" asked the Duke.

"Burlington is the only man who dare try," said Lord Darrell.

"I doubt whether any individual would have sufficient pluck," said Lord Squib.

"Yes," said the Duke, "it must, I think, be a joint-stock company to share the glory and the odium. Let us do it!"

There was a start, and a silence, broken by Annesley in a low voice.

"By Heavens it would be sublime—if practicable; but the difficulty does indeed seem insurmountable."

"Why, we would not do it," said the young Duke, "if it were not difficult. The first thing is to get a frame for our picture, to hit upon some happy pretence for assembling in an impromptu style the young and gay. Our purpose must not be too obvious. It must be something to which all expect to be asked, and where the presence of all is impossible; so that in fixing upon a particular member of a family, we may seem influenced by the wish, that no circle should be neglected. Then, too, it should be something like a water-party or a fête champêtre, where colds abound, and fits are always caught, so that a consideration for the old and the infirm may authorise us not to invite them; then too——"

Omnes. "Bravo! bravo! St. James. It shall be! it shall be!"

"It must be a fête champêtre," said Annesley, decidedly, "and as far from town as possible."

"Twickenham is at your service," said the Duke.

"Just the place, and just the distance. The only objection is, that by being yours, it will saddle the enterprise too much upon you. We must all bear our share in the uproar, for, trust me, there will be one; but there are a thousand ways by which our responsibility may be insisted upon. For instance, let us make a list of all our guests, and then let one of us act as secretary, and sign the invitations, which shall be like tickets. No other name need appear, and the hosts will indicate themselves at the place of rendezvous."

"My Lords," said Lord Squib, "I rise to propose the health of Mr. Secretary Annesley, and I think if any one carry the business through, it will be he."

"I accept the trust. At present be silent as night; for we have too much to mature, and our success depends upon our secrecy."

CHAPTER IX.

ARUNDEL DACRE, though little apt to cultivate an acquaintance with any one, called on the young Duke the morning after their meeting. The truth is, his imagination was touched by our hero's appearance. His Grace possessed all that accomplished manner of which Arundel painfully felt the want, and to which he eagerly yielded his admiration. He earnestly desired the Duke's friendship, but, with his usual *mauvaise honte*, their meeting did not advance his wishes. He was as shy and constrained as usual, and being really desirous of appearing to advantage, and leaving an impression in his favour, his manner was even divested of that somewhat imposing coldness which was not altogether ineffective. In short, he was extremely disagreeable. The Duke was courteous, as he usually was, and ever to the Dacres, but he was not cordial. He disliked Arundel Dacre,—in a word, he looked upon him as his favoured rival. The two young men occasionally met, but did not grow more intimate. Studiously polite the young Duke ever was both to him and to his lovely cousin, for his pride concealed his pique, and he was always afraid lest his manner should betray his mind.

In the meantime, Sir Lucius Grafton apparently was running his usual course of triumph. It is fortunate that those who will watch and wonder about everything, are easily satisfied with a reason, and are ever quick in detecting a cause: so Mrs. Dallington Vere was the fact that duly accounted for the Baronet's intimacy with the Dacres. All was right again between them. It was unusual, to be sure—these *rifacimentos;* still she was a charming woman; and it was well known that Lucius had spent twenty thousand on the county. Where was that to come from, they should like to know, but from old Dallington Vere's Yorkshire estates, which he had so wisely left to his pretty wife by the pink paper codicil?

And this lady of so many loves,—how felt she? Most agreeably, as all dames do who dote upon a passion, which they feel convinced will be returned, but which still waits for a response. Arundel Dacre would yield her a smile from a face more worn by thought than joy; and Arundel Dacre, who was wont to muse alone, was now ever ready to join his cousin and her friends in the ride or the promenade. Miss Dacre, too, had noticed to her a kindly change in her cousin's conduct to her father. He was more cordial to his uncle, sought to pay him deference, and seemed more desirous of gaining his good-will. The experienced eye, too, of this pretty woman allowed her often to observe that her hero's presence was not particularly occasioned, or particularly inspired, by his cousin. In a word, it was to herself that his remarks were addressed, his attentions devoted, and often she caught his dark and liquid eye fixed upon her beaming and refulgent brow.

Sir Lucius Grafton proceeded with that strange mixture of craft and passion which characterised him. Each day, his heart yearned more for the being on whom his thoughts should never have pondered. Now exulting in her increased confidence, she seemed already his victim; now awed by her majestic spirit, he despaired even of her being his bride. Now melted by her unsophisticated innocence, he cursed even the least unhallowed of his purposes; and now enchanted by her consummate loveliness, he forgot all but her beauty and his own passion.

Often had he dilated to her, with the skill of an arch deceiver, on the blessings of domestic joy; often, in her presence, had his eye sparkled; when he watched the infantile graces of some playful children. Then he would embrace them with a soft care and gushing fondness, enough to melt the heart of any mother whom he was desirous to seduce, and then, with a half murmured sigh, he regretted, in broken accents, that he too was not a father.

In due time, he proceeded even further. Dark hints of domestic

infelicity broke unintentionally from his ungoverned lips. Miss Dacre stared. He quelled the tumult of his thoughts, struggled with his outbreaking feelings, and triumphed; yet not without a tear, which forced its way down a face not formed for grief, and quivered upon his fair and downy cheek. Sir Lucius Grafton was well aware of the magic of his beauty, and used his charms to betray, as if he were a woman.

Miss Dacre, whose soul was sympathy, felt in silence for this excellent, this injured, this unhappy, this agreeable man. Ill could even her practised manner check the current of her mind, or conceal from Lady Aphrodite that she possessed her dislike. As for the young Duke, he fell into the lowest abyss of her opinions, and was looked upon as alike frivolous, heartless, and irreclaimable.

But how are the friends with whom we dined yesterday? Frequent were the meetings, deep the consultations, infinite the suggestions, innumerable the expedients. In the morning, they met and breakfasted with Annesley; in the afternoon, they met and lunched with Lord Squib; in the evening, they met and dined with Lord Darrell; and at night, they met and supped at the Alhambra. Each council only the more convinced them, that the scheme was feasible, and must be glorious. At last their ideas were matured, and Annesley took steps to break the great event to the world, who were on the eve of being astonished.

He repaired to Lady Bloomerly. The world sometimes talked of her Ladyship and Mr. Annesley,—the world were quite wrong, as they often are on this subject. Mr. Annesley knew the value of a female friend. By Lady Bloomerly's advice, the plan was entrusted in confidence to about a dozen dames equally influential. Then a few of the most considered male friends heard a strange report. Lord Darrell dropped a rumour at the Treasury, but with his finger on the mouth, and, leaving himself out of the list, proceeded to give his favourable opinion of the project, merely as a disinterested and expected guest. Then the Duke promised Peacock Piggott one night at the Alhambra, but swore him to solemn secrecy over a vase of sherbet. Then Squib told his tailor, in consideration that his bill should not be sent in; and finally, the Bird of Paradise betrayed the whole affair to the musical world, who were, of course, all agog. Then, when rumour began to wag its hundred tongues, the twelve peeresses found themselves bound in honour to step into the breach, yielded the plan their decided approbation and their avowed patronage, puzzled the grumblers, silenced the weak, and sneered down the obstinate.

The invitations began to issue, and the outcry against them burst forth. A *fronde* was formed, but they wanted a De Retz;

and many kept back, with the hope of being bribed from joining it. The four cavaliers soon found themselves at the head of a strong party, and then, like a faction who have successfully struggled for toleration, they now openly maintained their supremacy. It was too late to cabal. The uninvited could only console themselves by a passive sulk, or an active sneer; but this would not do, and their bilious countenances betrayed their chagrin.

The difficulty now was, not to keep the bores away, but to obtain a few of the beauties, who hesitated. A chaperon must be found for one; another must be added on to a party, like a star to the cluster of a constellation. Among those whose presence was most ardently desired, but seemed most doubtful, was Miss Dacre. An invitation had been sent to her father; but he was out of town, and she did not like to join so peculiar a party, without him: but it was unanimously agreed, that, without her, the affair would be a failure; and Charles Annesley was sent, envoy extraordinary, to arrange. With the good aid of his friend Mrs. Dallington, all was at length settled; and fervid prayers that the important day might be ushered in by a smiling sun, were offered up during the next fortnight, at half-past six every morning, by all civilised society, who then hurried to their night's rest.

CHAPTER X.

THE fête at "the Pavilion"—such was the title of the Twickenham Villa—though the subject of universal interest, was anticipated by no one with more eager anxiety than by Sir Lucius Grafton, for that day, he determined, should decide the fate of the Duke of St. James. He was sanguine as to the result—nor without reason. For the last month, he had, by his dark machinery, played desperately upon the feelings of Lady Aphrodite; and more than once had she dispatched rapid notes to her admirer, for counsel and for consolation. The Duke was more skilful in soothing her griefs than in devising expedients for their removal. He treated the threatened as a distant evil! and wiped away her tears in a manner which is almost an encouragement to weep.

At last the eventful morn arrived, and a scorching sun made those exult to whom the barge and the awning promised a progress equally calm and cool. Woe to the dusty britzska!—woe to the molten furnace of the crimson cabriolet!

They came, as the stars come out from the heavens, what time the sun is in his first repose—now a single hero, brilliant as a

planet—now a splendid party, clustering like a constellation. Music is on the waters, and perfume on the land: each moment, a barque glides up with its cymbals—each moment, a cavalcade bright with bouquets!

Ah! gathering of brightness!—ah! meeting of lustre!—why, why are you to be celebrated by one so obscure and dull as I am! Ye Lady Carolines, and ye Lady Franceses—ye Lady Barbaras and ye Lady Blanches, is it my fault?

O, graceful Lord Francis, why, why have you left us—why, why have you exchanged your Ionian lyre for an Irish harp! You were not made for politics—leave them to clerks. Fly—fly back to pleasure, to frolic, and fun! Confess, now, that you sometimes do feel a little queer. We say nothing of the difference between May Fair and Donnybrook.

And thou, too, Luttrell—gayest bard that ever threw off a triplet amid the clattering of cabs and the chattering of clubs—art thou, too, mute? Where—where dost thou linger? Is our Druid among the oaks of Ampthill—or, like a truant Etonian, is he lurking among the beeches of Burnham? What! has the immortal letter, unlike all other good advice, absolutely not been thrown away?—or is the jade incorrigible? Whichever be the case, you need not be silent. There is yet enough to do, and yet enough to instruct. Teach us, that wealth is not elegance; that profusion is not magnificence; and that splendour is not beauty. Teach us, that taste is a talisman, which can do greater wonders than the millions of the loanmonger. Teach us, that to vie is not to rival; and to imitate, not to invent. Teach us, that pretension is a bore. Teach us, that wit is excessively good-natured, and, like champagne, not only sparkles, but is sweet. Teach us the vulgarity of malignity. Teach us, that envy spoils our complexions, and that anxiety destroys our figure. Catch the fleeting colours of that sly chameleon, Cant, and show what excessive trouble we are ever taking to make ourselves miserable and silly. Teach us all this, and Aglaia shall stop a crow in its course, and present you with a pen—Thalia hold the golden fluid in a Sevre vase—and Euphrosyne support the violet-coloured scroll.

The four hosts greeted the arrivals, and assisted the disembarkations, like the famous four sons of Aymon. They were all dressed alike, and their costume excited great attention. At first, it was to have been very plain—black and white, and a single rose; but it was settled, that simplicity had been overdone, and, like a country girl after her first season, had turned into a most affected baggage,—so they agreed to be regal; and fancy uniforms, worthy of the Court of Oberon, were the order of the day. We shall not describe them, for the description of costume is the

most inventive province of our historical novelists, and we never like to be unfair, or trench upon our neighbour's lands or rights; but the Alhambra button indicated a mystical confederacy, and made the women quite frantic with curiosity.

The guests wandered through the gardens, always various, and now a Paradise of novelty. There were four brothers, fresh from the wildest recesses of the Carpathian Mount, who threw out such woodnotes wild, that all the artists stared; and it was universally agreed, that had they not been French chorus-singers, they would have been quite a miracle. But the Lapland sisters were the true prodigy, who danced the Mazurka in the national style. There was also a fire-eater; but some said he would never set the river in flames, though he had an antidote against all poisons! But then, our Mithridates always tried its virtues on a stuffed poodle, whose bark evinced its vitality. There also was a giant in the wildest parts of the shrubbery, and a dwarf, on whom the ladies showered their sugar-plums, and who, in return, offered them tobacco. But it was not true, that the giant sported stilts, or that the dwarf was a sucking-babe. Some people are so suspicious. Then a bell rang, and assembled them in the concert-room; and the Bird of Paradise, who, to-day, was consigned to the cavaliership of Peacock Piggott, condescended to favour them with a new song, which no one had ever heard, and which, consequently, made them feel more intensely all the sublimity of exclusiveness. Shall we forget the panniers of shoes which Melnotte had placed in every quarter of the gardens? We will say nothing of Maradan's cases of caps, because, for this incident, Lord Bagshot is our authority.

On a sudden, it seemed that a thousand bugles broke the blue air, and they were summoned to a dejeuner in four crimson tents, worthy of Sardanapalus. Over each waved the scutcheon of the president. Glittering were the glories of the hundred quarterings of the house of Darrell. "*Si non è vero è ben trovàto,*" was the motto.—Lord Darrell's grandfather had been a successful lawyer. —Lord Squib's emblazonry was a satire on its owner. "*Hold-fast*" was the motto of a man who had let loose. Annesley's simple shield spoke of the Conquest; but all paled before the banner of the house of Hauteville, for it indicated an alliance with royalty. The attendants of each pavilion wore the livery of its Lord.

Shall we attempt to describe the delicacy of this banquet, where imagination had been racked for novel luxury? Through the centre of each table ran a rivulet of rose-water, and gold and silver fish glanced in its unrivalled course. The bouquets were exchanged every half hour, and music soft and subdued, but constant and

thrilling, wound them up by exquisite gradations to that pitch of refined excitement, which is so strange an union of delicacy and voluptuousness, when the soul, as it were, becomes sensual, and the body, as it were, dissolves into spirit. And in this choice assembly, where all was youth, and elegance, and beauty, was it not right, that every sound should be melody, every sight a sight of loveliness, and every thought a thought of pleasure?

They arose, and re-assembled on the lawn, where they found, to their surprise, had arisen in their absence a Dutch Fair. Numerous were the booths,—innumerable were the contents. The first artists had arranged the pictures and the costumes: the first artists had made the trinkets and the toys. And what a very agreeable fair, where all might suit their fancy without the permission of that sulky tyrant,—a purse! All were in excellent humour, and no false shame prevented them from plundering the stalls. The noble proprietors set the example. Annesley offered a bouquet of precious stones to Charlotte Bloomerly, and it was accepted, and the Duke of St. James showered a sack of whimsical *breloques* among a scrambling crowd of laughing beauties. Among them was Miss Dacre. He had not observed her. Their eyes met, and she smiled. It seemed that he had never felt happiness before.

Ere the humours of the fair could be exhausted, they were summoned to the margin of the river, where four painted and gilded galleys, which might have sailed down the Cydnus, and each owning its peculiar chief, prepared to struggle for pre-eminence in speed. All betted; and the Duke, encouraged by the smile, hastened to Miss Dacre to try to win back some of his Doncaster losses, but Arundel Dacre had her arm in his, and she was evidently delighted with his discourse. His Grace's blood turned, and he walked away.

It was sunset, when they returned to the lawn; and then the ball-room presented itself; but the twilight was long, and the night was warm; there were no hateful dews, no odious mists, and therefore a great number danced on the lawn. The fair was illuminated, and all the little *marchandes* and their lusty porters walked about in their costume.

The Duke again rallied his courage, and seeing Arundel Dacre with Mrs. Dallington Vere, he absolutely asked Miss Dacre to dance. She was engaged. He doubted, and walked into the house disconsolate; yet if he had waited one moment, he would have seen Sir Lucius Grafton rejoin her, and lead her to the *cotillon* that was forming on the turf. The Duke sauntered to Lady Aphrodite, but she would not dance,—yet she did not yield his arm, and proposed a stroll. They wandered away to the extremity of the grounds. Fainter and fainter grew the bursts

of the revellers, yet neither of them spoke much, for both were dull.

Yet at length her Ladyship did speak, and amply made up for her previous silence. All former scenes, to this, were but as the preface to the book. All she knew and all she dreaded, all her suspicions, all her certainties, all her fears, were poured forth in painful profusion. This night was to decide her fate. She threw herself on his mercy, if he had forgotten his love. Out dashed all those arguments, all those appeals, all those assertions, which they say are usual under these circumstances. She was a woman; he was a man. She had staked her happiness on this venture; he had a thousand cards to play. Love, and first love, with her, as with all women, was everything; he and all men, at the worst, had a thousand resources. He might plunge into politics,—he might game,—he might fight,—he might ruin himself in innumerable ways, but she could only ruin herself in one.—Miserable woman! Miserable sex! She had given him her all. She knew it was little: would she had more! She knew she was unworthy of him! would she were not! She did not ask him to sacrifice himself to her: she could not expect it; she did not even desire it. Only, she thought he ought to know exactly the state of affairs and of consequences, and that certainly if they were parted, which assuredly they would be, most decidedly she would droop, and fade, and die. She wept, she sobbed; his entreaties alone seemed to prevent hysterics.

These scenes are painful at all times,—and even the callous, they say, have a twinge; but when the actress is really beautiful and pure, as this lady was, and the actor young, and inexperienced, and amiable, as this actor was, the consequences are more serious than is usual. The Duke of St. James was unhappy—he was discontented—he was dissatisfied with himself. He did not love this lady, if love were the passion which he entertained for Miss Dacre,—but she loved him. He knew that she was beautiful, and he was convinced that she was excellent. The world is malicious,—but the world had agreed that Lady Aphrodite was an unblemished pearl: yet this jewel was reserved for him! Intense gratitude almost amounted to love. In short, he had no idea, at this moment, that feelings are not in our power. His were captive, even if entrapped. It was a great responsibility to desert this creature, the only one from whom he had experienced devotion. To conclude: a season of extraordinary dissipation, to use no harsher phrase, had somewhat exhausted the nervous powers of our hero: his energies were deserting him; he had not heart or heartlessness enough to extricate himself from this dilemma. It seemed that if this being, to whom he was indebted for so much

joy, were miserable, he must be unhappy; that if she died, life ought to have—could have—no charms for him. He kissed away her tears—he pledged his faith—and Lady Aphrodite Grafton was his betrothed!

She wonderfully recovered. Her deep but silent joy seemed to repay him even for this bitter sacrifice. Compared with the late racking of his feelings, the present calm, which was merely the result of suspense being destroyed, seemed happiness. His conscience whispered approbation, and he felt that, for once, he had sacrificed himself to another.

They re-entered the Villa, and he took the first opportunity of wandering alone to the least frequented parts of the grounds:—his mind demanded solitude, and his soul required soliloquy.

"So the game is up! Truly, a most lame and impotent conclusion! And this, then, is the result of all my high fancies and indefinite aspirations! Verily, I am a very distinguished hero, and have not abused my unrivalled advantages in the least! What! am I bitter on myself? There will be enough to sing my praises, without myself joining in this chorus of congratulation. Oh! fool! fool! Now I know what folly is. But barely fifteen months since, I stepped upon these shores, full of hope and full of pride; and now I leave them—how? O! my dishonoured fathers! Even my posterity, which God grant I may not have, will look on my memory with hatred, and on hers with scorn!

"Well, I suppose we must live for ourselves. We both of us know the world; and Heaven can bear witness that we should not be haunted by any uneasy hankering after what has brought us such a heartache. If it were for love—if it were for—but away!—I will not profane her name—if it were for her that I was thus sacrificing myself, I could bear it—I could welcome it. I can imagine perfect and everlasting bliss in the sole society of one single being—but she is not that being. Let me not conceal it; let me wrestle with this bitter conviction!

"And am I, indeed, bound to close my career thus—to throw away all hope, all chance of felicity, at my age, for a point of honour? No, no,—it is not that. After all, I have experienced that with her, and from her, which I have with no other woman; and she is so good, so gentle, and all agree, so lovely! How infinitely worse would her situation be, if deserted, than mine is, as her perpetual companion! The very thought makes my heart bleed. Yes! amiable, devoted, dearest Afy, I throw aside these morbid feelings—you shall never repent having placed your trust in me. I will be proud and happy of such a friend, and you shall be mine for ever!"

A shriek broke on the air: he started. It was near: he hastened after the sound. He entered into a small green glade surrounded by shrubs, where had been erected a fanciful hermitage. There he found Sir Lucius Grafton on his knees, grasping the hand of the indignant but terrified Miss Dacre. The Duke rushed forward; Miss Dacre ran to meet him; Sir Lucius rose.

"This lady, Sir Lucius Grafton, is under my protection," said the young Duke, with a flashing eye but a calm voice. She clung to his arm; he bore her away. The whole was the affair of an instant.

The Duke and his companion proceeded in silence. She tried to hasten, but he felt her limbs shake upon his arm. He stopped: —no one, not even a servant, was near. He could not leave her for an instant. There she stood trembling, her head bent down, and one hand clasping the other, which rested on his arm. Terrible was her struggle, but she would not faint, and at length succeeded in repressing her emotions. They were yet a considerable way from the house. She motioned with her left hand to advance; but still she did not speak. On they walked, though more slowly, for she was exhausted, and occasionally stopped for breath, or strength.

At length she said, in a faint voice,—"I cannot join the party. I must go home directly. How can it be done?"

"Your companions," said the Duke—

"Are of course engaged, or not to be found; but surely, somebody I know is departing. Manage it: say I am ill."

"O, Miss Dacre! if you knew the agony of my mind!"

"Do not speak—for Heaven's sake, do not speak!"

He turned off from the lawn, and approached by a small circuit the gate of the ground. Suddenly, he perceived a carriage on the point of going off. It was the Duchess of Shropshire's.

"There is the Duchess of Shropshire! You know her—but not a minute is to be lost. There is such a noise, they will not hear. Are you afraid to stop here one instant by yourself? I shall not be out of sight, and not away a second. I run very quick."

"No—no, I am not afraid. Go—go!"

Away rushed the Duke of St. James, as if his life were on his speed. He stopped the carriage, spoke, and was back in an instant.

"Lean—lean on me with all your strength. I have told everything necessary to Lady Shropshire. Nobody will speak a word, because they believe you have a terrible headache. I will say everything necessary to Mrs. Dallington and your cousin. Do not

give yourself a moment's uneasiness. And, oh! Miss Dacre! if I might say one word!"

She did not stop him.

"If," continued he, "it be your wish, that the outrage of to-night should be known only to myself and him, I pledge my word it shall be so; though willingly, if I were authorised, I would act a different part in this affair."

"It is my wish." She spoke in a low voice, with her eyes still upon the ground—"And I thank you for this, and for all."

They had now joined the Shropshires; but it was now discovered Miss Dacre had no shawl: and sundry other articles were wanting, to the evident dismay of the Ladies Wrekin. They offered theirs, but their visitor refused, and would not allow the Duke to fetch her own. Off they drove; but when they had proceeded above half a mile, a continued shout on the road, which the fat coachman, for a long time, would not hear, stopped them, and up came the Duke of St. James, covered with dust, and panting like a racer, with Miss Dacre's shawl.

CHAPTER XI.

So much time was occupied by this adventure of the shawl, and by making requisite explanations to Mrs. Dallington Vere, that almost the whole of the guests had retired, when the Duke found himself again in the saloon. His brother-hosts, too, were off with various parties, to which they had attached themselves. He found the Fitz-pompeys, and a few still lingering for their carriages; and Arundel Dacre and his fair admirer. His Grace had promised to return with Lady Afy, and was devising some scheme by which he might free himself from this, now not very suitable, engagement, when she claimed his arm. She was leaning on it, and talking to Lady Fitz-pompey, when Sir Lucius approached, and, with his usual tone, put a note into the Duke's hand, saying at the same time,—"This appears to belong to you. I shall go to town with Piggott;"—and then he walked away.

With the wife leaning on his arm, the young Duke had the pleasure of reading the following lines, written with the pencil of the husband.

"AFTER what has just occurred, only one more meeting can take place between us, and the sooner that takes place, the better for all parties. This is no time for etiquette. I shall be in Kensing-

ton Gardens, in the grove on the right side of the summer-house, at half-past six to-morrow morning, and shall doubtless find you there."

Sir Lucius was not out of sight when the Duke had finished reading his cartel. Making some confused excuse to Lady Afy, which was not expected, he ran after the Baronet, and soon reached him.

"Grafton, I shall be punctual: but there is one point on which I wish to speak to you at once. The cause of this meeting may be kept, I hope, a secret!"

"So far as I am concerned, an inviolable one," bowed the Baronet stiffly; and they parted.

The Duke returned satisfied, for Sir Lucius Grafton ever observed his word—to say nothing of the great interest which he surely had this time in maintaining his pledge.

Our hero thought that he never should reach London. The journey seemed a day; and the effort to amuse Lady Afy, and to prevent her from suspecting, by his conduct, that anything had occurred, was most painful. Silent, however, he at last became; but her mind, too, was engaged; and she supposed that her admirer was quiet only because, like herself, he was happy. At length they reached her house, but he excused himself from entering, and drove on immediately to Annesley. He was at Lady Bloomerly's. Lord Darrell had not returned, and his servant did not expect him. Lord Squib was never to be found. The Duke put on a great coat over his uniform, and drove to White's:—it was really a wilderness. Never had he seen fewer men there in his life, and there were none of his set. The only young-looking man was old Colonel Carlisle, who, with his skilfully enamelled cheek, flowing auburn locks, shining teeth, and tinted whiskers, might have been mistaken for gay twenty-seven, instead of gray seventy-two; but the Colonel had the gout, to say nothing of any other objections.

The Duke took up the Courier, and read three or four advertisements of quack medicines—but nobody entered. It was nearly midnight: he got nervous. Somebody came in—Lord Hounslow for his rubber. Even his favoured child, Bagshot, would be better than nobody. The Duke protested that the next acquaintance who entered should be his second, old or young. His vow had scarcely been registered, when Arundel Dacre came in alone. He was the last man to whom the Duke wished to address himself, but Fate seemed to have decided it, and the Duke walked up to him.

"Mr. Dacre, I am about to ask of you a favour to which I have no claim."

Mr. Dacre looked a little confused, and murmured his willingness to do anything.

"To be explicit, I am engaged in an affair of honour of a very urgent nature. Will you be my friend?"

"Willingly." He spoke with more ease. "May I ask the name of the other party,——the——the cause of the meeting?"

"The other party is Sir Lucius Grafton."

"Hum!" said Arundel Dacre, as if he were no longer curious about the cause. "When do you meet?"

"At half-past six, in Kensington Gardens, to-morrow,—I believe I should say this morning."

"Your Grace must be wearied," said Arundel, with unusual ease and animation. "Now, follow my advice. Go home at once and get some rest. Give yourself no trouble about preparations: leave everything to me. I will call upon you at half-past five precisely, with a chaise and post-horses, which will divert suspicion. Now, good night!"

"But really, your rest must be considered—and then all this trouble!"

"Oh! I have been in the habit of sitting up all night. Do not think of me,—nor am I quite inexperienced in these matters, in too many of which I have unfortunately been engaged in Germany."

The young men shook hands, and the Duke hastened home. Fortunately, the Bird of Paradise was at her own establishment in Baker Street, a bureau where her secretary, in her behalf, transacted business with the various courts of Europe, and the numerous cities of Great Britain. Here many a negotiation was carried on for Opera engagements at Vienna, or Paris, or Berlin, or St. Petersburg. Here many a diplomatic correspondence conducted the fate of the musical festivals of York, or Norwich, or Exeter.

CHAPTER XII.

Let us return to Sir Lucius Grafton. He is as mad as any man must be, who feels that the imprudence of a moment has dashed to the ground all the plans, and all the hopes, and all the great results, over which he had so often pondered. The great day from which he had expected so much had passed, nor was it possible for four-and-twenty hours more completely to have reversed all his feelings and all his prospects. Miss Dacre had shared the innocent but unusual and excessive gaiety, which had properly become a

scene of festivity at once so agreeable, so various, and so novel. Sir Lucius Grafton had not been insensible to the excitement. On the contrary, his impetuous passions seemed to recall the former and more fervent days of his career, and his voluptuous mind dangerously sympathised with the beautiful and luxurious scene. He was elated too with the thought, that his freedom would perhaps be sealed this evening, and still more by his almost constant attendance on his fascinating companion. As the particular friend of the Dacre family, and as the secret ally of Mrs. Dallington Vere, he in some manner contrived always to be at Miss Dacre's side. With the laughing but insidious pretence, that he was now almost too grave and staid a personage for such scenes, he conversed with few others, and humorously maintaining that his "dancing days were over," danced with none but her. Even when her attention was engaged by a third person, he lingered about, and with his consummate knowledge of the world, easy wit, and constant resources, generally succeeded in not only sliding into the conversation, but engrossing it. Arundel Dacre too, although that young gentleman had not departed from his usual coldness in favour of Sir Lucius Grafton, the Baronet would most provokingly consider as his particular friend: never seemed to be conscious that his reserved companion was most punctilious in his address to him, but on the contrary called him in return "Dacre," and sometimes "Arundel." In vain young Dacre struggled to maintain his position. His manner was no match for that of Sir Lucius Grafton. Annoyed with himself, he felt confused, and often quitted his cousin, that he might be free of his friend. Thus, Sir Lucius Grafton contrived never to permit Miss Dacre to be alone with Arundel, and to her he was so courteous, so agreeable, and so useful, that his absence seemed always a blank, or a period in which something ever went wrong.

The triumphant day rolled on, and each moment Sir Lucius felt more sanguine and more excited. We will not dwell upon the advancing confidence of his desperate mind. Hope expanded into certainty,—certainty burst into impatience. In a desperate moment, he breathed his passion.

May Dacre was the last girl to feel at a loss in such a situation. No one would have rung him out of a saloon with an air of more contemptuous majesty. But the shock,—the solitary strangeness of the scene,—the fear, for the first time, that none were near, and perhaps, also, her exhausted energy, frightened her, and she shrieked. One only had heard that shriek, yet that one was Legion. Sooner might the whole world know the worst, than this person suspect the least. Sir Lucius was left silent with rage, mad with passion, desperate with hate.

He gasped for breath. Now his brow burnt, now the cold dew ran off his countenance in streams. He cleuched his fist, he stamped with agony,—he found at length his voice, and he blasphemed to the unconscious woods.

His quick brain flew to the results like lightning. The Duke had escaped from his mesh; his madness had done more to win this boy Miss Dacre's heart, than an age of courtship. He had lost the idol of his passion, he was fixed for ever with the creature of his hate. He loathed the idea. He tottered into the hermitage, and buried his face in his hands.

Something must be done. Some monstrous act of energy must repair this fatal blunder. He appealed to the mind which had never deserted him. The oracle was mute. Yet vengeance might even slightly redeem the bitterness of despair. This fellow should die; and his girl, for already he hated Miss Dacre, should not triumph in her minion. He tore a leaf from his tablets, and wrote the lines we have already read.

The young Duke reached home. You expect, of course, that he sat up all night making his will, and answering letters. By no means. The first object that caught his eye was an enormous ottoman. He threw himself upon it without undressing, and without speaking a word to Luigi, and in a moment was fast asleep. He was fairly exhausted. Luigi stared, and called Spiridion to consult. They agreed that they dare not go to bed, and must not leave their Lord; so they played Ecarté, till at last they quarrelled and fought with the candles over the table. But even this did not wake their unreasonable master; so Spiridion threw down a few chairs by accident; but all in vain. At half-past five there was a knocking at the gate, and they hurried away.

Arundel Dacre entered with them, woke the Duke, and praised him for his punctuality. His Grace thought that he had only dozed a few minutes; but time pressed; five minutes arranged his toilet, and they were first on the field.

In a moment, Sir Lucius and Mr. Piggott appeared. Arundel Dacre, on the way, had anxiously inquired as to the probability of reconciliation, but was told at once it was impossible, so now he measured the ground and loaded the pistols with a calmness which was admirable. They fired at once; the Duke in the air, and the Baronet in his friend's side. When Sir Lucius saw his Grace fall, his hate vanished. He ran up with real anxiety and unfeigned anguish.

"Have I hit you, by H—ll!"

His Grace was magnanimous, but the case was urgent. A surgeon gave a favourable report, and extracted the ball on the spot.

The Duke was carried back to his chaise, and in an hour was in the state bed, not of the Alhambra, but of his neglected mansion.

Arundel Dacre retired when he had seen his friend home, but gave urgent commands that he should be kept quiet. No sooner was the second out of sight, than the principal ordered the room to be cleared, with the exception of Spiridion, and then, rising in his bed, wrote this note, which the page was secretly to deliver.

"——— House, ——, 182-.

"Dear Miss Dacre,

"A very unimportant but somewhat disagreeable incident has occurred. I have been obliged to meet Sir Lucius Grafton, and our meeting has fortunately terminated without any serious consequences Yet I wish that you should hear of this first from me, lest you might imagine that I had not redeemed my pledge of last night, and that I had placed for a moment my own feelings in competition with yours. This is not the case, and never shall be, dear Miss Dacre, with one whose greatest pride is to subscribe himself

"Your most obedient and faithful servant,

"St. James."

CHAPTER XIII.

The world talked of nothing but the duel between the Duke of St. James and Sir Lucius Grafton. It was a thunderbolt; and the phenomenon was accounted for by every cause but the right one. Yet even those who most confidently solved the riddle were the most eagerly employed in investigating its true meaning The seconds were of course applied to. Arundel Dacre was proverbially unpumpable; but Peacock Piggott, whose communicative temper was an adage, how came he on a sudden so diplomatic? Not a syllable oozed from a mouth which was ever open; not a hint from a countenance which never could conceal its mind. He was not even mysterious, but really looked just as astonished and was just as curious as themselves. Fine times these for "The Universe," and "The New World!" All came out about Lady Afy; and they made up for their long and previous ignorance, or, as they now boldly blustered, their long and considerate forbearance. Sheets given away gratis,—edition on Saturday night for the country, and woodcuts of the Pavilion Fête: the when, the how, and the wherefore. A. The summer-house, and Lady Aphrodite meeting the young Duke. B. The hedge behind which Sir Lu-

cius Grafton was concealed. C. Kensington Gardens, and a cloudy morning; and so on. Cruikshank did wonders.

But let us endeavour to ascertain the feelings of the principal agents in this odd affair. Sir Lucius now was cool, and the mischief being done, took a calm review of the late mad hours. As was his custom, he began to inquire whether any good could be elicited from all this evil. He owed his late adversary sundry monies, which he had never contemplated the possibility of repaying to the person who had eloped with his wife. Had he shot his creditor, the account would equally have been cleared; and this consideration, although it did not prompt, had not dissuaded the late desperate deed. As it was, he now appeared still to enjoy the possession both of his wife and his debts, and had lost his friend. Bad generalship, Sir Lucy! Reconciliation was out of the question. The Duke's position was a good one. Strongly entrenched with a flesh wound, he had all the sympathy of society on his side; and after having been confined for a few weeks, he could go to Paris for a few months, and then return, as if the Graftons had never crossed his eye, rid of a troublesome mistress and a troublesome friend. His position was certainly a good one, but Sir Lucius was astute, and he determined to turn this Shumla of his Grace. The quarrel must have been about her Ladyship. Who could assign any other cause for it? And the Duke must now be weak with loss of blood and anxiety, and totally unable to resist any appeal, particularly a personal one, to his feelings. He determined, therefore, to drive Lady Afy into his Grace's arms. If he could only get her into the house for an hour, the business would be settled.

These cunning plans were, however, nearly being crossed by a very simple incident. Annoyed at finding that her feelings could be consulted only by sacrificing those of another woman, Miss Dacre, quite confident that as Lady Aphrodite was innocent in the present instance, she must be immaculate, told everything to her father, and stifling her tears, begged him to make all public; but Mr. Dacre, after due consideration, enjoined silence.

In the meantime, the young Duke was not in so calm a mood as the Baronet. Rapidly the late extraordinary events dashed through his mind, and already those feelings which had prompted his soliloquy in the garden, were no longer his. All forms, all images, all ideas, all memory, melted into Miss Dacre. He felt that he loved her with a perfect love; that she was to him what no other woman had been, even in the factitious delirium of early passion. A thought of her seemed to bring an entirely novel train of feelings, impressions, wishes, hopes. The world with her must be a totally different system, and his existence in her society, a

new and another life. Her very purity refined the passion which raged even in his exhausted mind. Gleams of virtue, morning streaks of duty, broke upon the horizon of his hitherto clouded soul; an obscure suspicion of the utter worthlessness of his life whispered in his hollow ear; he darkly felt that happiness was too philosophical a system to be the result or the reward of impulse, however unbounded, and that principle alone could create and could support that bliss which is our being's end and aim.

But when he turned to himself, he viewed his situation with horror, and yielded almost to despair. What—what could she think of the impure libertine who dared to adore her? If ever time could bleach his own soul, and conciliate hers, what—what was to become of Aphrodite? Was his new career to commence by a new crime? Was he to desert this creature of his affections, and break a heart which beat only for him? It seemed that the only compensation he could offer for a life which had achieved no good, would be to establish the felicity of the only being whose happiness seemed in his power. Yet what a prospect! If before he had trembled—now——

But his harrowed mind and exhausted body no longer allowed him even anxiety. Weak, yet excited, his senses fled; and when Arundel Dacre returned in the evening, he found his friend delirious. He sat by his bed for many hours. Suddenly, the Duke speaks. Arundel Dacre rises: he leans over the sufferer's couch.

Ah! why turns the face of the listener so pale—and why gleam those eyes with terrible fire? The perspiration courses down his clear but sallow cheek: he throws his dark and clustering curls aside, and passes his hand over his damp brow, as if to ask whether he, too, had lost his senses from this fray.

The Duke is agitated. He waves his arm in the air, and calls out, in a tone of defiance and of hate. His voice sinks: it seems that he breathes a milder language, and speaks to some softer being. There is no sound, save the long-drawn breath of one on whose countenance is stamped infinite amazement. Arundel Dacre walks the room disturbed; often he pauses, plunged in deep thought. 'Tis an hour past midnight, and he quits the bedside of the young Duke.

He pauses at the threshold, and seems to respire even the noisome air of the metropolis, as if it were Eden. As he proceeds down Hill Street, he stops, and gazes for a moment on the opposite house. What passes in his mind we know not. Perhaps he is reminded that in that mansion dwell beauty, wealth, and influence —and that all might be his. Perhaps love prompts that gaze—perhaps ambition. Is it passion, or is it power? or does one struggle with the other?

As he gazes, the door opens, but without servants; and a man, deeply shrouded in his cloak, comes out. It was night, and the individual was disguised; but there are eyes which can pierce at all seasons, and through all concealments,—and Arundel Dacre marked with astonishment Sir Lucius Grafton.

CHAPTER XIV.

When it was understood that the Duke of St. James had been delirious, public feeling reached what is called its height; that is to say, the curiosity and the ignorance of the world were about equal. Everybody was indignant,—not so much because the young Duke had been shot, but because they did not know why. If the sympathy of the women could have consoled him, our hero might have been reconciled to his fate. Among these, no one appeared more anxious as to the result, and more ignorant as to the cause, than Mrs. Dallington Vere. Arundel Dacre called on her the morning ensuing his midnight observation, but understood that she had not seen Sir Lucius Grafton, who, they said, had quitted London, which she thought probable. Nevertheless, Arundel thought proper to walk down Hill Street at the same hour, and, if not at the same minute, yet, in due course of time, he discovered the absent Baronet.

In two or three days, the young Duke was declared out of immediate danger, though his attendants must say he remained exceedingly restless, and by no means in a satisfactory state; yet, with their aid, they had a right to hope the best. At any rate, if he were to go off, his friends would have the satisfaction of remembering that all had been done that could be: so saying, Dr. X. took his fee, and Surgeons Y. and Z. prevented his conduct from being singular.

Now began the operations on the Grafton side. A letter from Lady Aphrodite full of distraction. She was fairly mystified. What could have induced Lucy suddenly to act so, puzzled her, as well it might. Her despair, and yet her confidence in his Grace, seemed equally great. Some talk there was of going off to Cleve at once. Her husband, on the whole, maintained a rigid silence and studied coolness. Yet he had talked of Vienna and Florence, and even murmured something about public disgrace and public ridicule. In short, the poor lady was fairly worn out, and wished to terminate her harassing career at once, by cutting the Gordian knot. In a word, she proposed coming on to her admirer, and, as

she supposed, her victim; and having the satisfaction of giving him his cooling draughts, and arranging his bandages.

If the meeting between the young Duke and Sir Lucius Grafton had been occasioned by any other cause than the real one, it is difficult to say what might have been the fate of this proposition. Our own opinion is, that this work would have been in two volumes; for the requisite morality would have made out the present one; but, as it was, the image of Miss Dacre hovered above our hero as his guardian genius. He despaired of ever obtaining her; but yet he determined not wilfully to crush all hope. Some great effort must be made, to right his position. Lady Aphrodite must not be deserted:—the very thought increased his fever. He wrote, to gain time; but another billet, in immediate answer, only painted increased terrors, and described the growing urgency of her persecuted situation. He was driven into a corner—but even a stag at bay is awful:—what, then, must be a young Duke, the most noble animal in existence?

Ill as he was, he wrote these lines, not to Lady Aphrodite, but to—her husband:—

"My dear Grafton,

"You will be surprised at hearing from me. Is it necessary for me to assure you, that my interference on a late occasion was accidental? And can you, for a moment, maintain that, under the circumstances, I could have acted in a different manner? I regret the whole business; but most I regret that we were placed in collision.

"I am ready to cast all memory of it into oblivion; and as I unintentionally offended, I indulge the hope that, in this conduct, you will bear me company.

"Surely, men like us are not to be dissuaded from following our inclinations by any fear of the opinion of the world. The whole affair is, at present, a mystery; and I think, with our united fancies, some explanation may be hit upon, which will render the mystery quite impenetrable, while it professes to offer a satisfactory solution.

"I do not know whether this letter expresses my meaning, for my mind is somewhat agitated, and my head not very clear; but if you be inclined to understand it in the right spirit, it is sufficiently lucid. At any rate, my dear Grafton, I have once more the pleasure of subscribing myself, faithfully yours,

"St. James."

This letter was marked "immediate," consigned to the custody of Luigi, with positive orders to deliver it personally to Sir Lucius; and if not at home, to follow, till he found, him.

He was not at home, and he was found at ——'s Club House. Sullen, dissatisfied with himself, doubtful as to the result of his fresh manœuvres, and brooding over his infernal debts, Sir Lucius had stepped into ——, and passed the whole morning playing desperately with Lord Hounslow and Baron de Berghem. Never had he experienced such a smashing morning. He had long far exceeded his resources, and was proceeding with a vague idea that he should find money somehow or other, when this note was put into his hand, as it seemed to him by Providence. The signature of Semiramis could not have imparted more exquisite delight to a collector of autographs. Were his long views, his complicated objects, and doubtful results to be put in competition a moment, with so decided, so simple, and so certain a benefit?—certainly not, by a gamester. He rose from the table, and with strange elation wrote these lines:—

"My dearest Friend,

"You forgive me, but can I forgive myself? I am plunged in overwhelming grief. Shall I come on? Your mad but devoted friend,

"Lucius Grafton."

"The Duke of St. James, &c. &c. &c."

They met the same day. After a long consultation, it was settled that Peacock Piggott should be entrusted, in confidence, with the secret of the affair—merely a drunken squabble, "growing out" of the Bird of Paradise. Wine, jealousy, an artful woman, and headstrong youth, will account for anything—they accounted for the present affair. The story was believed, because the world were always puzzled at Lady Aphrodite being the cause. The Baronet proceeded with promptitude to make the version pass current: he indicted "The Universe," and "The New World;" he prosecuted the caricaturists; and was seen everywhere with his wife. "The Universe" and "The New World" revenged themselves on the Signora; and then she indicted them. They could not now even libel an Opera singer with impunity: where was the boasted liberty of the Press?

In the meantime, the young Duke, once more easy in his mind, wonderfully recovered; and on the eighth day after the Ball of Beauty, he returned to the Pavilion, which had now resumed its usual calm character, for fresh air and soothing quiet.

CHAPTER XV.

On the morning of the young Duke's departure for Twickenham, as Miss Dacre and Lady Caroline St. Maurice were sitting together at the house of the former, and moralising over the last night's ball, Mr. Arundel Dacre was announced.

"You have just arrived in time to offer your congratulations, Arundel, on an agreeable event," said Miss Dacre. "Lord St. Maurice is about to lead to the hymeneal altar——"

"Lady Sophy Wrekin—I know it."

"How extremely diplomatic! The *attaché* in your very air. I thought of course I was to surprise you; but future ambassadors have such extraordinary sources of information."

"Mine is a very simple one. The Duchess imagining, I suppose, that my attentions were directed to the wrong lady, warned me some weeks past. However, my congratulations shall be duly paid. Lady Caroline St. Maurice, allow me to express——"

"All that you ought to feel," said Miss Dacre. "But men at the present day pride themselves on insensibility."

"Do you think I am insensible, Lady Caroline?" asked Arundel.

"I must protest against unfair questions," said her Ladyship.

"But it is not unfair. You are a person who have now seen me more than once, and therefore, according to May, you ought to have a perfect knowledge of my character. Moreover, you do not share the prejudices of my family. I ask you, then, do you think I am so heartless as May would insinuate?"

"Does she insinuate so much?"

"Does she not call me insensible, because I am not in raptures that your brother is about to marry a young lady, who, for aught she knows, may be the object of my secret adoration?"

"Arundel, you are perverse," said Miss Dacre.

"No, May, I am logical."

"I have always heard that logic is much worse than wilfulness," said Lady Caroline.

"But Arundel always was both," said Miss Dacre. "He is not only unreasonable, but he will always prove that he is right. Here is your purse, sir!" she added, with a smile, presenting him with the result of her week's labour.

"This is the way she always bribes me, Lady Caroline. Do you approve of this corruption?"

"I must confess, I have a slight though secret kindness for a little bribery. Mamma is now on her way to Mortimer's, on a very corrupt embassy. The *nouvelle Marie*, you know, must be

reconciled to her change of lot by quite a new set of playthings. I can give you no idea of the necklace that our magnificent cousin, in spite of his wound, has sent Sophy."

"But then such a cousin!" said Miss Dacre. "A young Duke, like the young lady in the Fairy Tale, should scarcely ever speak without producing brilliants."

"Sophy is highly sensible of the attention. As she amusingly observed, except himself marrying her, he could scarcely do more. I hear the carriage. Adieu, love! Good morning, Mr. Dacre."

"Allow me to see you to your carriage. I am to dine at Fitzpompey House to-day, I believe."

Arundel Dacre returned to his cousin, and seating himself at the table, took up a book, and began reading it the wrong side upwards; then he threw down a ball of silk, then he cracked a netting needle, and then with a husky sort of voice, and a half blush, and altogether an air of infinite confusion, he said, "This has been an odd affair, May, of the Duke of St. James and Sir Lucius Grafton?"

"A very distressing affair, Arundel."

"How singular that I should have been his second, May?"

"Could he have found any one more fit for that office, Arundel?"

"I think he might. I must say this; that had I known at the time the cause of the fray, I should have refused to accompany him."

She was silent, and he resumed

"An opera singer at the best! Sir Lucius Grafton showed more discrimination. Peacock Piggott was just the character for his place, and I think my principal, too, might have found a more congenial sprite. What do you think, May?"

"Really Arundel, this is a subject of which I know nothing."

"Indeed! Well, it is very odd, May; but do you know I have a queer suspicion that you know more about it than anybody else."

"I! Arundel?" she exclaimed, with marked confusion.

"Yes, *you*, May," he repeated with great firmness, and looked her in the face with a glance which would read her soul. "Ay! I am sure you do."

"Who says so?"

"Oh! do not fear that you have been betrayed. No one says it; but I know it. We future ambassadors, you know, have such extraordinary sources of information."

"You jest, Arundel, on a grave subject."

"Grave! yes, it is grave, May Dacre. It is grave, that there should be secrets between us; it is grave, that our House should

have been insulted; it is grave, that you, of all others, should have been outraged; but oh! it is much more grave, it is bitter, that any other arm, than this, should have avenged the wrong." He rose from his chair, he paced the room in agitation, and gnashed his teeth with a vindictive expression, that he tried not to suppress.

"O! my cousin, my dear, dear cousin! spare me!" She hid her face in her hands, yet she continued speaking in a broken voice, "I did it for the best. It was to suppress strife, to prevent bloodshed. I knew your temper, and I feared for your life—yet I told my father, I told him all; and it was by his advice that I have maintained throughout the silence which I, perhaps too hastily, at first adopted."

"My own dear May! spare *me!* I cannot mark a tear from you without a pang. How I came to know this, you wonder. It was the delirium of that person who should not have played so proud a part in this affair, and who is yet our friend; it was his delirium that betrayed all. In the madness of his excited brain, he re-acted the frightful scene, declared the outrage, and again avenged it. Yet, believe me, I am not tempted by any petty feeling, of showing I am not ignorant of what is considered a secret, to declare all this. I know, I feel your silence was for the best,—that it was prompted by sweet and holy feelings for my sake. Believe me, my dear cousin, if anything could increase the infinite affection with which I love you, it would be the consciousness, that at all times, whenever my image crosses your mind, it is to muse for my benefit, or to extenuate my errors.

"Dear May, you, who know me better than the world, know well my heart is not a mass of ice; and you, who are ever so ready to find a good reason, even for my most wilful conduct, and an excuse for my most irrational, will easily credit, that in interfering in an affair in which you are concerned, I am not influenced by an unworthy, an officious, or a meddling spirit. No, my own May! it is because I think it better for you that we should speak upon this subject, that I have ventured to treat upon it. Perhaps I broke it in a crude, but, credit me, not in an unkind spirit. I am well conscious I have a somewhat ungracious manner; but you, who have pardoned it so often, will excuse it now. To be brief, it is of your companion to that accursed fête that I would speak."

"Mrs. Dallington?"

"Surely she. Avoid her, May. I do not like that woman. You know, I seldom speak at hazard: if I do not speak more distinctly now, it is because I will never magnify suspicions into certainties, which we must do even if we mention them. But I sus-

pect—greatly suspect. An open rupture would be disagreeable—would be unwarrantable—would be impolitic. The season draws to a close. Quit town somewhat earlier than usual, and, in the meantime, receive her, if necessary; but, if possible, never alone. You have many friends; and, if no other, Lady Caroline St. Maurice is worthy of your society."

He bent down his head, and kissed her forehead: she pressed his faithful hand.

"And now, dear May, let me speak of a less important object,—of myself. I find this borough a mere delusion. Every day new difficulties arise; and every day my chance seems weaker. I am wasting precious time, for one who should be in action. I think, then, of returning to Vienna, and at once. I have some chance of being appointed Secretary of Legation, and I then shall have achieved what was the great object of my life—independence."

"This is always a sorrowful subject to me, Arundel. You have cherished such strange—do not be offended, if I say, such erroneous ideas, on the subject of what you call Independence, that I feel that, upon it, we can consult neither with profit to you, nor satisfaction to myself. Independence! Who is independent, if the heir of Dacre bow to any one? Independence! Who can be independent, if the future head of one of the first families in this great country will condescend to be the secretary even of a King?"

"We have often talked of this, May, and perhaps I have carried a morbid feeling to some excess; but my paternal blood flows in these veins, and it is too late to change. I know not how it is, but I seem misplaced in life. My existence is a long blunder."

"Too late to change, dearest Arundel! Oh! thank you for those words. Can it, can it ever be too late to acknowledge error? Particularly if, by that very acknowledgment, we not only secure our own happiness, but that of those we love, and those who love us."

"Dear May! when I talk with you, I talk with my good genius; but I am in closer and more constant converse with another mind, and of that I am the slave. It is my own. I will not conceal from you, from whom I have concealed nothing, that doubts and dark misgivings of the truth and wisdom of my past feelings, and my past career, will ever and anon flit across my fancy, and obtrude themselves upon my consciousness. Your father——yes! I feel that I have not been to him what nature intended, and what he deserved."

"O, Arundel!" she said with streaming eyes, "he loves you like a son. Yet, yet, be one!"

He seated himself on the sofa by her side, and took her small hand, and bathed it with his kisses.

"My sweet and faithful friend—my very sister. I am overpowered with feelings to which I have hitherto been a stranger. There is a cause for all this contest of my passions. It must out. My being has changed. The scales have fallen from my sealed eyes, and the fountain of my heart o'erflows. Life seems to have a new purpose, and existence a new cause. Listen to me, listen; and if you can, May, comfort me!"

CHAPTER XVI.

At Twickenham, the young Duke recovered rapidly. Not altogether displeased with his recent conduct, his self-complacency assisted his convalescence. Sir Lucius Grafton visited him daily. Regularly, about four or five o'clock, he galloped down to the Pavilion, with the last *on dit:* some gay message from White's, a *mot* of Lord Squib, or a *trait* of Charles Annesley. But while he studied to amuse the wearisome hours of his imprisoned friend, in the midst of all his gaiety, an interesting contrition was ever breaking forth, not so much by words as looks. It was evident that Sir Lucius, although he dissembled his affliction, was seriously affected by the consequence of his rash passion; and his amiable victim, whose magnanimous mind was incapable of harbouring an inimical feeling, and ever responded to a soft and generous sentiment, felt actually more aggrieved for his unhappy friend, than for himself. Of Arundel Dacre, the Duke had not seen much. That gentleman never particularly sympathised with Sir Lucius Grafton, and now he scarcely endeavoured to conceal the little pleasure which he received from the Baronet's society. Sir Lucius was the last man not to detect this mood; but as he was confident that the Duke had *not* betrayed him, he could only suppose that Miss Dacre had confided the affair to her family, and therefore, under all circumstances, he thought it best to be unconscious of any alteration in Arundel Dacre's intercourse with him. Civil, therefore, they were when they met; the Baronet was even courteous; but they both mutually avoided each other.

At the end of three weeks, the Duke of St. James returned to town in perfect condition, and received the congratulations of his

to visit him at Twickenham. Nothing had then passed between them on the cause of his illness; but his Grace could not but observe, that the manner of his valued friend was more than commonly cordial. And Miss Dacre, with her father, was among the first to hail his return to health and the metropolis.

The Bird of Paradise, who, since the incident, had been several times in hysterics, and had written various notes, of three or four lines each, of inquiries and entreaties to join her noble friend, had been kept off from Twickenham by the masterly tactics of Lord Squib. She, however, would drive to the Duke's house the day after his arrival in town, and was with him when sundry loud knocks, in quick succession, announced an approaching levee. He locked her up in his private room, and hastened to receive the compliments of his visitors. In the same apartment, among many others, he had the pleasure of meeting, for the first time, Lady Aphrodite Grafton, Lady Caroline St. Maurice, and Miss Dacre, all women whom he had either promised, intended, or offered to marry. A curious situation this! And really, when our hero looked upon them once more, and viewed them, in delightful rivalry, advancing with their congratulations, he was not surprised at the feelings with which they had inspired him. Far, far exceeding the *bonhommie* of Macheath, the Duke could not resist remembering, that had it been his fortune to have lived in the land in which his historiographer will soon be wandering; in short, to have been a Pacha instead of a Peer, he might have married all three.

A prettier fellow, and three prettier women, had never met since the immortal incident of Ida.

It required the thorough breeding of Lady Afy to conceal the anxiety of her passion; Miss Dacre's eyes showered triple sunshine, as she extended a hand not too often offered; but Lady Caroline was a cousin, and consanguinity, therefore, authorised as well as accounted for the warmth of her greeting.

CHAPTER XVII.

A VERY few days after his return, the Duke of St. James dined with Mr. Dacre. It was the first time that he had dined with him during the season. The Fitz-pompeys were there; and among others, his Grace had the pleasure of again meeting a few of his Yorkshire friends.

Once more, he found himself at the right-hand of Miss Dacre. All his career, since his arrival in England, flitted across his mind. Doncaster, dear Doncaster, where he had first seen her, teemed only with delightful reminiscences to a man whose favourite had bolted. Such is the magic of love! Then came Castle Dacre and the Orange Terrace, and their airy romps, and the delightful party to Hauteville; and then, Dacre Abbey. An involuntary shudder seemed to damp all the ardour of his soul; but when he turned and looked upon her beaming face, he could not feel miserable.

He thought that he had never been at so agreeable a party in his life: yet it was chiefly composed of the very beings whom he daily execrated for their powers of boredom. And he himself was not very entertaining. He was certainly more silent than loquacious, and found himself very often gazing with mute admiration on the little mouth, every word breathed forth from which seemed inspiration. Yet he was happy. Oh! what happiness is his, who dotes upon a woman! Few could observe from his conduct what was passing in his mind; yet the quivering of his softened tones, and the mild lustre of his mellowed gaze; his subdued and quiet manner; his unperceived yet infinite attentions; his memory of little incidents, that all but lovers would have forgotten; the total absence of all compliment, and gallantry, and repartee—all these, to a fine observer, might have been gentle indications of a strong passion; and to her to whom they were addressed, sufficiently intimated, that no change had taken place in his feelings, since the warm hour in which he first whispered his o'erpowering love.

The ladies retired, and the Duke of St. James fell into a reverie. A political discourse of the most elaborate genius now arose. Lord Fitz-pompey got parliamentary. Young Faulcon made his escape, having previously whispered to another youth, not unheard by the Duke of St. James, that his mother was about to depart, and he was convoy. His Grace, too, had heard Lady Fitz-pompey say, that she was going early to the Opera. Shortly afterwards, parties evidently retired. But the debate still raged. Lord Fitz-pompey had caught a stout Yorkshire squire, and was delightedly astounding, with official graces, his stern opponent. A

sudden thought occurred to the Duke; he stole out of the room, and gained the saloon.

He found it almost empty. With sincere pleasure, he bid Lady Balmont, who was on the point of departure, farewell, and promised to look in at her box. He seated himself by Lady Greville Nugent, and dexterously made her follow Lady Balmont's example. She withdrew with the conviction, that his Grace would not be a moment behind her. There was only old Mrs. Hungerford and her rich daughter remaining. They were in such raptures with Miss Dacre's singing, that his Grace was quite in despair; but chance favoured him. Even old Mrs. Hungerford this night broke through her rule of not going to more than one house, and she drove off to Lady de Courcy's.

They were alone. It is sometimes an awful thing to be alone with those we love.

"Sing that again!" asked the Duke, imploring. "It is my favourite air; it always reminds me of Dacre."

She sang, she ceased; she sang with beauty, and she ceased with grace; but all unnoticed by the tumultuous soul of her adoring guest. His thoughts were intent upon a greater object. The opportunity was sweet; and yet those boisterous wassailers, they might spoil all.

"Do you know that this is the first time that I have seen your rooms lit up?" said the Duke.

"Is it possible! I hope they gain the approbation of so distinguished a judge."

"I admire them exceedingly. By-the-bye, I see a new cabinet in the next room. Swaby told me the other day, that you were one of his lady patronesses. I wish you would show it me. I am very curious in cabinets."

She rose, and they advanced to the end of another and a longer room.

"This is a beautiful saloon," said the Duke. "How long is it?"

"I really do not know; but I think, between forty and fifty feet."

"Oh! you must be mistaken. Forty or fifty feet! I am an excellent judge of distances. I will try. Forty or fifty feet! Ah! the next room included. Let us walk to the end of the next room. Each of my paces shall be one foot and a half."

They had now arrived at the end of the third room.

"Let me see," resumed the Duke; "you have a small room to the right. Oh! did I not hear that you had made a conservatory? I see—I see it—lit up too! Let us go in. I want to gain some hints about London conservatories."

It was not exactly a conservatory; but a balcony of large dimensions had been fitted up on each side with coloured glass, and was open to the gardens. It was a rich night of fragrant June. The moon and stars were as bright as if they had shone over the terrace of Dacre, and the perfume of the flowers reminded him of his favourite orange-trees. The mild, cool scene was such a contrast to the hot and noisy chamber they had recently quitted, that for a moment they were silent.

"You are not afraid of this delicious air?" asked his Grace.

"Midsummer air," said Miss Dacre, "must surely be harmless."

Again there was silence; and Miss Dacre, after having plucked a flower and tended a plant, seemed to express an intention of withdrawing. Suddenly he spoke, and in a gushing voice of heartfelt words.

"Miss Dacre, you are too kind, too excellent to be offended, if I dare to ask whether anything could induce you to view with more indulgence one who sensibly feels how utterly he is unworthy of you?"

"You are the last man whose feelings I should wish to hurt. Let us not revive a conversation to which, I can assure you, neither of us looks back with satisfaction."

"Is there then no hope? Must I ever live with the consciousness of being the object of your scorn?"

"Oh, no, no! As you will speak, let us understand each other. However I may approve of my decision, I have lived quite long enough to repent the manner in which it was conveyed. I cannot, without the most unfeigned regret—I cannot for a moment remember, that I have addressed a bitter word to one to whom I am under the greatest obligations. If my apologies——"

"Pray, pray be silent!"

"I must speak. If my apologies, my complete, my most humble apologies can be any compensation for treating with such lightness feelings which I now respect, and offers by which I now consider myself honoured,—accept them!"

"O, Miss Dacre! that fatal word—respect!"

"We have warmer words in this house for you. You are now our friend."

"I dare not urge a suit which may offend you; yet if you could read my heart, I sometimes think that we might be happy. Let me hope!"

"My dear Duke of St. James, I am sure you will not ever offend me, because I am sure you will not ever wish to do it. There are few people in this world for whom I entertain a more sincere regard than yourself. I am convinced, I am conscious, that when

we met, I did sufficient justice neither to your virtues nor your talents. It is impossible for me to express with what satisfaction I now feel, that you have resumed that place in the affections of this family to which you have an hereditary right. I am grateful, truly, sincerely grateful for all that you feel with regard to me individually; and believe me, in again expressing my regret that it is not in my power to view you in any other light than as a valued friend, I feel that I am pursuing that conduct which will conduce as much to your happiness as my own.

"My *happiness*, Miss Dacre!"

"Indeed, such is my opinion. I will not again endeavour to depreciate the feelings which you entertain for me, and by which, ever remember, I feel honoured; but these very feelings prevent you from viewing their object so dispassionately as I do."

"I am at a loss for your meaning—at least, favour me by speaking explicitly:—you see, I respect your sentiments, and do not presume to urge that on which my very happiness depends."

"To be brief, then, I will not affect to conceal that marriage is a state which has often been the object of my meditations. I think it the duty of all women, that so important a change in their destiny should be well considered. If I know anything of myself, I am convinced that I should never survive an unhappy marriage."

"But why dream of anything so utterly impossible?"

"So very probable,—so very certain, you mean. Ay! I repeat my words, for they are truth. If I ever marry, it is to devote every feeling, and every thought, each hour, each instant of existence, to a single being for whom I alone live. Such devotion I expect in return; without it, I should die, or wish to die; but such devotion can never be returned by you."

"You amaze me! I! who live only on your image."

"Your education, the habits in which you are brought up, the maxims which have been instilled into you from your infancy, the system which each year of your life has more matured, the worldly levity with which everything connected with woman is viewed by you and your companions; whatever may be your natural dispositions, all this would prevent you, all this would render it a perfect impossibility, all this will ever make you utterly unconscious of the importance of the subject on which we are now conversing. Pardon me for saying it, you know not of what you speak. Yes! however sincere may be the expression of your feelings to me this moment, I shudder to think on whom your memory dwelt even this hour but yesterday. I never will peril my happiness on such a chance; but there are others, who do not think as I do."

"Miss Dacre! save me! If you knew all, you would not doubt. This moment is my destiny."

"My dear Duke of St. James, save yourself. There is yet time. You have my prayers."

"Let me then hope——"

"Indeed, indeed, it cannot be. Here our conversation on this subject ends for ever."

"Yet we part friends!" He spoke in a broken voice.

"The best and truest!" She extended her arm; he pressed her hand to his impassioned lips, and quitted the house, mad with love and misery.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE Duke threw himself into his carriage in that mood which fits us for desperate deeds. What he intended to do, indeed, was doubtful, but something very vigorous, very decided, perhaps very terrible. An indefinite great effort danced, in misty magnificence, before the vision of his mind. His whole being was to be changed —his life was to be revolutionised. Such an alteration was to take place, that even she could not doubt the immense yet incredible result. Then Despair whispered its cold-blooded taunts, and her last hopeless words echoed in his ear. But he was too agitated to be calmly miserable, and, in the poignancy of his feelings, he even meditated death. One thing, however, he could obtain,—one instant relief was yet in his power—solitude. He panted for the loneliness of his own chamber, broken only by his agitated musings.

The carriage stopped; the lights and noise called him to life. This, surely, could not be home? Whirled open the door, down dashed the steps, with all that prompt precision which denotes the practised hand of an aristocratic retainer.

"What is all this, Symmons? Why did you not drive home?"

"Your Grace forgets, that Mr. Annesley and some gentlemen sup with your Grace to-night at the Alhambra."

"Impossible! Drive home."

"Your Grace perhaps forgets, that your Grace is expected?" said the experienced servant, who knew when to urge a master, who, to-morrow, might blame him for permitting his caprice.

"What am I to do? Stay here. I will run up stairs, and put them off."

He ran up into the crush room. The Opera was just over, and some parties, who were not staying the ballet, had already assembled there. As he passed along, he was stopped by Lady Fitz-pompey, who would not let such a capital opportunity escape of exhibiting Caroline and the young Duke together.

"Mr. Bulkley," said her Ladyship, "there must be something wrong about the carriage." An experienced, middle-aged gentleman, who jobbed on in society, by being always ready, and knowing his cue, resigned the arm of Lady Caroline St. Maurice, and disappeared.

"George," said Lady Fitz-pompey, "give your arm to Carry, just for one moment."

If it had been anybody but his cousin, the Duke would easily have escaped; but Caroline he invariably treated with marked regard; perhaps because his conscience occasionally reproached him, that he had not treated her with a stronger feeling. At this moment, too, she was the only being in the world, save one, whom he could remember with satisfaction: he felt that he loved her most affectionately, but somehow she did not inspire him with those peculiar feelings which thrilled his heart at the recollection of May Dacre.

In this mood, he offered an arm, which was accepted; but he could not in a moment assume the tone of mind befitting his situation and the scene. He was silent; for him a remarkable circumstance.

"Do not stay here," said Lady Caroline in a soft voice, which her mother could not overhear. "I know you want to be away. Steal off."

"Where can I be better than with you, Carry?" said the young Duke, determined not to leave her, and loving her still more for her modest kindness; and thereon he turned round, and, to show that he was sincere, began talking with his usual spirit. Mr. Bulkley of course never returned, and Lady Fitz-pompey felt as satisfied with her diplomatic talents, as a plenipotentiary who has just arranged an advantageous treaty.

Arundel Dacre came up, and spoke to Lady Fitz-pompey. Never did two persons converse together, who were more dissimilar in their manner and their feelings; and yet Arundel Dacre did contrive to talk,—a result which he could not always accomplish, even with those who could sympathise with him. Lady Fitz-pompey listened to him with attention; for Arundel Dacre, in spite of his odd manner, or perhaps in some degree in consequence of it, had obtained a distinguished reputation both among men and women; and it was the great principle of Lady Fitz-pompey to attach to

her the distinguished youth of both sexes. She was pleased with this public homage of Arundel Dacre; because he was one who, with the reputation of talents, family, and fashion, seldom spoke to any one, and his attentions elevated their object. Thus she maintained her empire.

St. Maurice now came up to excuse himself to the young Duke, for not attending at the Alhambra to-night. "Sophy could not bear it," he whispered: "she had got her head full of the most ridiculous fancies, and it was in vain to speak: so he had promised to give up that, as well as Crockford's."

This reminded our hero of his party, and the purpose of his entering the Opera. He determined not to leave Caroline till her carriage was called; and he began to think that he really must go to the Alhambra, after all. He resolved to send them off at an early hour.

"Anything new to-night, Henry?" asked his Grace, of Lord St. Maurice. "I have just come in."

"Oh! then you have seen them?"

"Seen whom?"

"The most knowing *forestieri* we ever had. We have been speaking of nothing else the whole evening. Has not Caroline told you? Arundel Dacre introduced me to them."

"Who are they?"

"I forget their names. Dacre, how do you call the heroes of the night? Dacre never answers. Did you ever observe that? But, see! there they come."

The Duke turned, and observed Lord Darrell advancing with two gentlemen with whom his Grace was well acquainted. These were Prince Charles de Whiskerburg and Count Frill.

M. de Whiskerburg was the eldest son of a prince, who, besides being the premier noble of the empire, possessed, in his own country, a very pretty park of two or three hundred miles in circumference, in the boundaries of which the imperial mandate was not current, but hid its diminished head before the supremacy of a subject worshipped under the title of John the Twenty-fourth. M. de Whiskerburg was a very young man, very tall, with a very fine figure, and very fine features. In short, a sort of Hungarian Apollo; only his beard, his mustachios, his whiskers, his favoris, his padishas, his sultanas, his mignonettas, his dulcibellas, did not certainly entitle him to the epithet of *imberbis*, and made him rather an apter representative of the Hungarian Hercules.

Count Frill was a very different sort of personage. He was all rings and ringlets, ruffles, and a little rouge. Much older than his companion, short in stature, plump in figure, but with a most de-

fined waist, fair, blooming, with a multiplicity of long light curls, and a perpetual smile playing upon his round countenance, he looked like the Cupid of an Opera Olympus.

The Duke of St. James had been very intimate with these distinguished gentlemen in their own country, and had received from them many and most distinguished attentions. Often had he expressed to them his sincere desire to greet them in his native land. Their mutual anxiety, of never again meeting, was now removed If his heart, instead of being bruised, was absolutely broken, still honour, conscience, the glory of his House, his individual reputation, alike urged him not to be cold or backward at such a moment. He advanced, therefore, with a due mixture of grace and warmth, and congratulated them on their arrival. At this moment, Lady Fitz-pompey's carriage was announced. Promising to return to them in an instant, he hastened to his cousin; but Mr. Arundel Dacre had already offered his arm, which, for Arundel Dacre, was really pretty well.

The Duke was now glad that he had a small re-union this evening, as he could at once pay a courtesy to his foreign friends. He ran into the Signora's dressing-room, to assure her of his presence. He stumbled upon Peacock Piggott as he came out, and summoned him to fill the vacant place of St. Maurice, and then sent him with a message to some friends who yet lingered in their box, and whose presence, he thought, might be an agreeable addition to the party.

You entered the Alhambra by a Saracenic cloister, from the ceiling of which an occasional lamp threw a gleam upon some Eastern arms hung up against the wall. This passage led to the Armoury, a room of moderate dimensions, but hung with rich contents. Many an inlaid breastplate,—many a Mameluke scimitar and Damascus blade,—many a gemmed pistol and pearl-embroidered saddle, might there be seen, though viewed in a subdued and quiet light. All seemed hushed, and still, and shrouded in what had the reputation of being a palace of pleasure.

In this chamber assembled the expected guests. And having all arrived they proceeded down a small gallery to the banqueting-room. The room was large and lofty. It was fitted up as an Eastern tent. The walls were hung with scarlet cloth, tied up with ropes of gold. Round the room crouched recumbent lions richly gilt, who grasped in their paw a lance, the top of which was a coloured lamp. The ceiling was emblazoned with the Hauteville arms, and was radiant with burnished gold. A cresset lamp was suspended from the centre of the shield, and not only emitted an equable flow of soft though brilliant light, but

also, as the aromatic oil wasted away, distilled an exquisite perfume.

The table blazed with golden plate, for the Bird of Paradise loved splendour. At the end of the room, under a canopy and upon a throne, the shield and vases lately executed for his Grace now appeared. Everything was gorgeous, costly, and imposing but there was no pretence, save in the original outline, at maintaining the Oriental character. The furniture was French; and opposite the throne Canova's Hebe, bounded with a golden cup from a pedestal of ormolu.

The guests are seated; but after a few minutes, the servants withdraw. Small tables of ebony and silver, and dumb waiters of ivory and gold, conveniently stored, are at hand, and Spiridion never leaves the room. The repast was refined, exquisite, various. It was one of those meetings where all eat. When a few persons, easy and unconstrained, unincumbered with cares, and of dispositions addicted to enjoyment, get together at past midnight, it is extraordinary what an appetite they evince. Singers also are proverbially prone to gourmandize; and though the Bird of Paradise unfortunately possessed the smallest mouth in all Singingland, it is astonishing how she pecked! But they talked as well as feasted, and were really gay.

"Prince," said the Duke, "I hope Madame de Harestein approves of your trip to England?"

The Prince only smiled, for he was of a silent disposition, and therefore wonderfully well suited his travelling companion.

"Poor Madame de Harestein!" exclaimed Count Frill. "What despair she was in, when you left Vienna, my dear Duke. I did what I could to amuse her. I used to take my guitar, and sing to her morning and night, but without effect. She certainly would have died of a broken heart, if it had not been for the dancing-dogs."

"Did they bite her?" asked a lady who affected the wit of Lord Squib, "and so inoculate her with gaiety."

"Everybody was mad about the dancing-dogs. They came from Peru, and danced the mazurka in green jackets with a *jabot*. Oh! what a *jabot!*"

"I dislike animals excessively," remarked another lady, who was as refined as Mr. Annesley, her model.

"Dislike the dancing-dogs!" said Count Frill. "Ah! my good lady, you would have been enchanted. Even the Kaiser fed them with pistachio nuts. Oh! so pretty! Delicate leetle things, soft shining little legs, and pretty little faces! so sensible, and with such *jabots!*"

"I assure you, they were excessively amusing," said the Prince in a soft, confidential under-tone to his neighbour, Mrs. Montfort, who was as dignified as she was beautiful, and who admiring his silence, which she took for state, smiled and bowed with fascinating condescension.

"And what else has happened very remarkable, Count, since I left you?" asked Lord Darrell.

"Nothing, nothing, my dear Darrell. This *bêtise* of a war has made us all serious. If old Clamstandt had not married that gipsy, little Dugiria, I really think I should have taken a turn to Belgrade."

"You should not eat so much, Poppet!" drawled Charles Annesley to a Spanish danseuse, tall, dusky and lithe, glancing like a lynx and graceful as a jennet. She was very silent, but no doubt indicated the possession of Cervantic humour by the sly calmness with which she exhausted her own waiter, and pillaged her neighbours.

"Why not?" said a little French actress, highly finished like a miniature, who scarcely ate anything, but drank champagne and chatted with equal rapidity and composure, and who was always ready to fight anybody's battle, provided she could get an opportunity to talk. "Why not, Mr. Annesley? You never will let anybody eat—I never eat myself, because every night, having to talk so much, I am dry, dry, dry,—so I drink, drink, drink. It is an extraordinary thing, that there is no language which makes you so thirsty as French."

"What can be the reason?" asked a sister of Mrs. Montfort, a tall fair girl, who looked sentimental, but was only silly.

"Because there is so much salt in it," said Lord Squib.

"Delia," drawled Mr. Annesley, "you look very pretty to-night!"

"I am charmed to charm you, Mr. Annesley. Shall I tell you what Lord Bon Mot said of you?"

"No, *ma mignonne!* I never wish to hear my own good things."

"*Spoiled*, you should add," said the fair rival of Lord Squib, "if Bon Mot be in the case."

"Lord Bon Mot is a most gentlemanlike man," said Delia, indignant at an admirer being attacked. "He always wants to be amusing. Whenever he dines out, he comes and sits with me for half an hour to catch the air of the Parisian badinage."

"And you tell him a variety of little things?" asked Lord Squib, insidiously drawing out the secret tactics of Bon Mot.

"*Beaucoup, beaucoup,*" said Delia, extending two little white

hands sparkling with gems. "If he come in ever so—how do you call it? heavy—not that—in the domps—Ah! it is that—If ever he come in the domps, he goes out always like a *soufflée*."

"As empty, I have no doubt," said the witty lady.

"And as sweet, I have no doubt," said Lord Squib; "for Delcroix complains sadly of your excesses, Delia."

"Mr. Delcroix complain of me! That, indeed, is too bad. Just because I recommend Montmorency de Versailles to him for an excellent customer, ever since he abuses me, merely because Montmorency has forgot, in the hurry of going off, to pay his little account."

"But he says, you have got all the things," said Lord Squib, whose great amusement was to put Delia in a passion.

"What of that?" screamed the little lady. "Montmorency gave them me."

"Don't make such a noise," said the Bird of Paradise. "I never can eat when there is a noise. Duke," continued she in a fretful tone, "they make such a noise!"

"Annesley, keep Squib quiet."

"Delia, leave that young man alone. If Isidora would talk a little more, and you eat a little more, I think you would be the most agreeable little ladies I know. Poppet! put those bonbons in your pocket. You should never eat sugar-plums in company."

Thus talking agreeable nonsense, tasting agreeable dishes, and sipping agreeable wines, an hour ran on. Sweetest music from an unseen source ever and anon sounded, and Spiridion swung a censer full of perfumes round the chamber. At length the Duke requested Count Frill to give them a song. The Bird of Paradise would never sing for pleasure, only for fame and a slight cheque. The Count begged to decline, and at the same time asked for a guitar. The Signora sent for hers; and his Excellency preluding with a beautiful simper, gave them some slight thing to this effect.

I.

Charming Bignetta! charming Bignetta!
What a gay little girl is charming Bignetta!
She dances, she prattles,
She rides and she rattles;
But she always is charming——that charming Bignetta!

II.

Charming Bignetta! charming Bignetta!
What a wild little witch is charming Bignetta!

When she smiles, I 'm all madness;
When she frowns, I 'm all sadness;
But she always is smiling——that charming Bignetta!

III.

Charming Bignetta! charming Bignetta!
What a wicked young rogue is charming Bignetta!
She laughs at my shyness,
And flirts with his Highness;
Yet still she is charming——that charming Bignetta!

IV.

Charming Bignetta! charming Bignetta!
What a dear little girl is charming Bignetta
"Think me only a sister,"
Said she trembling: I kissed her.
What a charming young sister is——charming Bignetta!

He ceased; and although

"——— The Ferrarese
To choicer music chimed his gay guitar
In Este's Halls,"

yet still his song served its purpose, for it raised a smile.

"I wrote that for Madame Sapiepha, at the Congress of Verona," said Count Frill. "It has been thought amusing."

"Madame Sapiepha!" exclaimed the Bird of Paradise. "What! that pretty little woman, who has such pretty caps?"

"The same! Ah! what caps! what taste!"

"You like caps, then?" asked the Bird of Paradise, with a sparkling eye.

"Oh! if there be anything more than another, that I know most, it is the cap. Here," said he, rather oddly unbuttoning his waistcoat, "you see what lace I have got."

"Ah! me! what lace!" exclaimed the Bird, in rapture. "Duke, look at his lace. Come here, sit next to me. Let me look at that lace." She examined it with great attention, then turned up her beautiful eyes with a fascinating smile. "*Ah! c'est jolie, n'est-ce pas?* But you like caps. I tell you what, you shall see my caps. Spiridion, go, *mon cher*, and tell Ma'amselle to bring my caps—all my caps—one of each set."

In due time entered the Swiss, with the caps—all the caps—

one of each set. As she handed them in turn to her mistress, the Bird chirped a panegyric upon each.

"That is pretty, is it not, and this also? but this is my favourite. What do you think of this border? *c'est belle cette garniture? et ce jabot, c'est très séduisant, n'est-ce pas? Mais voici*, the cap of Princess Lichtenstein. *C'est superb, c'est mon favori.* But I also love very much this of the Duchess de Berri. She gave me the pattern herself. And, after all, this *cornette à petite santé* of Lady Blaze is a dear little thing; then, again, this *coiffe à dentelle* of Lady Macaroni is quite a pet."

"Pass them down," said Lord Squib; "we want to look at them." Accordingly they were passed down. Lord Squib put one on.

"Do I look superb, sentimental, or only pretty?" asked his Lordship. The example was contagious, and most of the caps were appropriated. No one laughed more than their mistress, who not having the slightest idea of the value of money, would have given them all away on the spot; not from any good-natured feeling, but from the remembrance that to-morrow she might amuse half an hour in buying others.

Whilst some were stealing, and she remonstrating, the Duke clapped his hands like a Caliph. The curtain at the end of the apartment was immediately withdrawn, and the ball-room stood revealed.

It was the same size as the banqueting-hall. Its walls exhibited a long perspective of golden pilasters, the frequent piers of which were of looking-glass, save where, occasionally, a picture had been, as it were, inlaid in its rich frame. Here was the Titian Venus of the Tribune, deliciously copied by a French artist: there, the Roman Fornarina, with her delicate grace, beamed like the personification of Raffaelle's genius. Here, Zuleikha, living in the light and shade of that magician Guercino, in vain summoned the passions of the blooming Hebrew: and there, Cleopatra, preparing for her last immortal hour, proved by what we saw that Guido had been a lover.

The ceiling of this apartment was richly painted, and richly gilt: from it were suspended three lustres by golden cords, which threw a softened light upon the floor of polished and curiously inlaid woods. At the end of the apartment was an orchestra.

Round the room, waltzed the elegant revellers. Softly and slowly, led by their host, they glided along like spirits of air; but each time that the Duke passed the musicians, the music became livelier, and the motion more brisk, till at length you might have

mistaken them for a college of spinning dervishes. One by one, an exhausted couple retreated from the lists. Some threw themselves on a sofa, some monopolised an easy chair; but in twenty minutes the whirl had ceased. At length, Peacock Piggott gave a groan, which denoted returning energy, and raised a stretching leg in air, bringing up, though most unwittingly, upon his foot, one of the Bird's sublime and beautiful caps.

"Halloa! Piggott, armed *cap au pied*, I see," said Lord Squib This joke was a signal for general resuscitation.

The Alhambra formed a quadrangle: all the chambers were on the basement story. In the middle of the court of the quadrangle was a beautiful fountain; and the court was formed by a conservatory, which was built along each side of the interior square, and served, like a cloister or covered way, for a communication between the different parts of the building. To this conservatory they now repaired. It was broad, full of rare and delicious plants and flowers, and brilliantly illuminated. Busts and statues were intermingled with the fairy grove; and a rich, warm hue, by a skilful arrangement of coloured light, was thrown over many a nymph and fair divinity,—many a blooming hero and beardless god. Here they lounged in different parties, talking on such subjects as idlers ever fall upon; now and then plucking a flower,—now and then listening to the fountain,—now and then lingering over the distant music,—and now and then strolling through a small apartment which opened to their walks, and which bore the title of the Temple of Gnidus. Here, Canova's Venus breathed an atmosphere of perfume and of light—that wonderful statue, whose full-charged eye is not very classical, to be sure—but then, how true!

While they were thus whiling away their time, Lord Squib proposed a visit to the Theatre, which he had ordered to be lit up. To the theatre they repaired. They rambled over every part of the house, amused themselves with a visit to the Gallery, and then collected behind the scenes. They were excessively amused with the properties; and Lord Squib proposed they should dress themselves. In a few minutes they were all in costume. A crowd of queens and chambermaids, Jews and chimney-sweeps, lawyers and Charleys, Spanish Dons and Irish officers, rushed upon the stage. The little Spaniard was Almaviva, and fell into magnificent attitudes, with her sword and plume. Lord Squib was the old woman of Brentford,—and very funny. Sir Lucius Grafton, Harlequin; and Darrell, Grimaldi. The Prince, and the Count, without knowing it, figured as watchmen. Squib whispered Annesley, that Sir Lucius O'Trigger might appear in character, but was prudent enough to suppress the joke.

The band was summoned, and they danced quadrilles with infinite spirit, and finished the night, at the suggestion of Lord Squib, by breakfasting on the stage. By the time this meal was dispatched, the purple light of morn had broke into the building, and the ladies proposed an immediate departure.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

THE arrival of the two distinguished foreigners reanimated the dying season. All vied in testifying their consideration, and the Duke of St. James exceeded all. He took them to see the alterations at Hauteville House, which no one had yet witnessed; and he asked their opinion of his furniture, which no one had yet decided on. Two fêtes in the same week established, as well as maintained, his character as the Archduke of fashion. Remembering, however, the agreeable month which he had spent in the kingdom of John the Twenty-fourth, he was reminded with annoyance, that his confusion at Hauteville prevented him from receiving his friends *en grand seigneur* in his hereditary castle. Metropolitan magnificence, which, if the parvenu could not equal, he at least could imitate, seemed a poor return for the feudal splendour and imperial festivity of an Hungarian magnate. While he was brooding over these reminiscences, it suddenly occurred to him, that he had never made a progress into his western territories. Pen Bronnock Palace was the boast of Cornwall, though its Lord had never paid it a visit. The Duke of St. James sent for Sir Carte Blanche.

Besides entertaining the foreign nobles, the young Duke could no longer keep off the constantly-recurring idea, that something must be done to entertain himself. He shuddered to think where and what he should have been, had not these gentlemen so providentially arrived. As for again repeating the farce of last year, he felt that it would no longer raise a smile. Yorkshire he shunned. Doncaster made him tremble. A week with the Duke of Burlington at Marringworth; a fortnight with the Fitz-pompeys at Malthorpe; a month with the Graftons at Cleve; and so on—he shuddered at the very idea. Who can see a Pantomime more than once? Who could survive a Pantomime the twentieth time? All the shifting scenes, and flitting splendour; all the motley crowds of sparkling characters; all the quick changes, and full variety, are, once, enchantment. But when the splendour is discovered to be monotony; the change, order, and the caprice, a system; when the characters play ever the same part, and the variety never varies; how dull, how weary, how infinitely flat, is such

a world to that man who requires from its converse, not occasional relaxation, but constant excitement!

Pen Bronnock was a new object. At this moment in his life, novelty was indeed a treasure. If he could cater for a month, no expense should be grudged: as for the future, he thrust it from his mind. By taking up his residence, too, at Pen Bronnock, he escaped from all invitations,—and so, in a word, the worthy Knight received orders to make all preparations at the Palace for the reception of a large party in the course of three weeks.

Sir Carte, as usual, did wonders. There was, fortunately for his employer, no time to build or paint, but some dingy rooms were hung with scarlet cloth; cart-loads of new furniture were sent down; the theatre was re-burnished; the stables put in order; and, what was of infinitely more importance in the estimation of all Englishmen, the neglected pile was "well aired."

CHAPTER II.

We are in the country, and such a country, that even in Italy we think of thee, native Hesperia! Here, myrtles grow, and fear no blasting North, or blighting East. Here, the South wind blows with that soft breath which brings the bloom to flesh. Here, the land breaks in gentle undulations; and here, blue waters kiss a verdant shore. Hail! to thy thousand bays, and deep-red earth, thy marble quarries, and thy silver veins! Hail! to thy far-extending landscape, whose sparkling villages and streaky fields no clime can match!

Some gales we owe to thee of balmy breath, some gentle hours when life had fewest charms. And we are grateful for all this ——to say nothing of your cider and your junkets.

The Duke arrived just as the setting sun crowned the proud palace with his gleamy rays. It was a pile which the immortal Inigo had raised in sympathy with the taste of a noble employer, who had passed his earliest years in Lombardy. Of stone, and sometimes even of marble, with pediments and balustrades, and ornamented windows, and richly-chased keystones, and flights of steps, and here and there a statue, the structure was quite Palladian, though a little dingy, and, on the whole, very imposing.

There were suites of rooms which had no end, and staircases which had no beginning. In this vast pile, nothing was more natural than to lose your way,—an agreeable amusement on a

rainy morning. There was a collection of pictures, very various, by which phrase we understand not select. Yet they were amusing; and the Canalettis were unrivalled. There was a regular ball-room, and a theatre; so resources were at hand. The scenes, though dusty, were numerous; and the Duke had provided new dresses. The park was not a park; by which we mean, that it was rather a chase than the highly-finished inclosure which we associate with the first title. In fact, Pen Brounock Chase was the right name of the settlement; but some monarch travelling, having been seized with a spasm, recruited his strength under the roof of his loyal subject, then the chief seat of the House of Hauteville, and having in his urgency been obliged to hold a privy council there, the supreme title of palace was assumed by right.

The domain was bounded on one side by the sea; and here a yacht, and some slight craft, rode at anchor in a small green bay, and offered an opportunity for the adventurous, and a refuge for the wearied. When you have been bored for an hour or two on earth, it sometimes is a change to be bored for an hour or two on water.

The house was soon full, and soon gay. The guests, and the means of amusing them, were equally numerous. But this was no common *villeggiatura*,—no visit to a family with their regular pursuits and matured avocations. The host was as much a guest as any other. The young Duke appointed Lord Squib master of the ceremonies, and gave orders for nothing but constant excitement. Constant excitement his Lordship managed to maintain, for he was experienced, clever, careless and gay, and, for once in his life, had the command of unbounded resources. He ordered, he invented, he prepared, and he expended. They acted, they danced, they sported, they sailed, they feasted, they masqueraded; and when they began to get a little wearied of themselves, and their own powers of diversion gradually vanished, then a public ball was given twice a-week at the palace, and all the West of England invited. New faces brought new ideas; new figures brought new fancies. All were delighted with the young Duke,—and flattery from novel quarters will for a moment whet even the appetite of the satiated. Simplicity, too, can interest. There were some Misses Gayweather who got unearthed, who never had been in London, though nature had given them sparkling eyes and springing persons. This tyranny was too bad. Papa was quizzed, Mamma flattered, and the daughters' simplicity amused these young lordlings. Rebellion was whispered in the small ears of the Gayweathers. The little heads, too, of the Gayweathers were turned. They were the constant butt, and the constant resource, of every lounging dandy.

The Bird of Paradise also arranged her professional engagements, so as to account with all possible propriety for her professional visit at Pen Bronnock. The musical meeting at Exeter over, she made her appearance, and some concerts were given, which electrified all Cornwall. Count Frill was very strong here; though, to be sure, he also danced, and acted, in all varieties. He was the soul, too, of a masqued ball; but when complimented on his accomplishments, and thanked for his exertions, he modestly depreciated his worth, and panegyrized the dancing-dogs.

As for the Prince, on the whole, he maintained his silence; but it was at length discovered by the fair sex, that he was not stupid, but sentimental. When this was made known, he rather lost ground with the dark sex, who, before thinking him thick, had vowed that he was a devilish good fellow; but now, being really envious, had their tale and hint, their sneer and sly joke. M. de Whiskerburg had one active accomplishment—this was his dancing. His gallopade was declared to be divine: he absolutely sailed in air. His waltz, at his will, either melted his partner into a dream, or whirled her into a frenzy! Dangerous M. de Whiskerburg!

CHAPTER III.

It is said, that the conduct of refined society, in a literary point of view, is, on the whole, productive but of slight interest; that all we can aspire to is, to trace a brilliant picture of brilliant manners; and that when the dance and the festival have been duly inspired by the repartee and the sarcasm, and the gem, the robe, and the plume adroitly lighted up by the lamp and the lustre, our cunning is exhausted. And so your novelist generally twists this golden thread with some substantial silken cord, for use, and works up, with the light dance, and with the heavy dinner, some secret marriage, or some shrouded murder. And thus, by English plots and German mysteries, the page trots on, or jolts, till, in the end, Justice will have her way,—and the three volumes are completed.

A plan both good, antique, and popular, but not our way. We prefer trusting to the slender incidents which spring from out our common intercourse. There is no doubt that that great pumice-stone, Society, smooths down the edges of your thoughts and manners. Bodies of men, who pursue the same object, must ever resemble each other: the life of the majority must ever be

imitation. Thought is a labour to which few are competent; and truth requires for its development as much courage as acuteness. So conduct becomes conventional, and opinion is a legend; and thus all men act and think alike.

But this is not peculiar to what is called fashionable life—it is peculiar to civilisation, which gives the passions less to work upon. Mankind are not more heartless because they are clothed in ermine; it is, that their costume attracts us to their characters, and we stare because we find the prince or the peeress neither a conqueror nor a heroine. The great majority of human beings, in a country like England, glide through existence in perfect ignorance of their natures, so complicated and so controlling is the machinery of our social life! Few can break the bonds that tie them down, and struggle for self-knowledge; fewer, when the talisman is gained, can direct their illuminated energies to the purposes with which they sympathise.

A mode of life, which encloses in its circle all the dark and deep results of unbounded indulgence, however it may appear to some who glance over the sparkling surface, does not exactly seem to us one either insipid or uninteresting to the moral speculator; and, indeed, we have long been induced to suspect, that the seeds of true sublimity lurk in a life which, like this book, is half fashion and half passion.

We know not how it was, but about this time an unaccountable, almost an imperceptible coolness seemed to spring up between our hero and the Lady Aphrodite. If we were to puzzle our brains for ever, we could not give you the reason. Nothing happened—nothing had been said or done, which could indicate its origin. Perhaps this *was* the origin; perhaps the Duke's conduct had become, though unexceptionable, too negative. But here we only throw up a straw. Perhaps if we must go on suggesting, anxiety ends in callousness.

His Grace had thought so much of her feelings, that he had quite forgotten his own, or worn them out. Her Ladyship, too, was perhaps a little disappointed at the unexpected reconciliation. When we have screwed our courage up to the sticking point, we like not to be baulked. Both, too, perhaps—we go on *perhapsing*—both, too, we repeat, perhaps, could not help mutually viewing each other as the cause of much mutual care and mutual anxiousness. Both, too, perhaps, were a little tired—but without knowing it. The most curious thing, and which would have augured worst to a calm judge, was, that they silently seemed to agree not to understand that any alteration had really taken place between them, which, we think, was a bad sign: because a lover's quarrel, we all know, like a storm in summer, portends a renewal

of warm weather or ardent feelings; and a lady is never so well seated in her admirer's heart, as when those letters are interchanged which express so much, and those explanations entered upon which explain so little.

And here we would dilate on greater things than some imagine; but, unfortunately, we are engaged For Newmarket calls Sir Lucius and his friends. We will not join them, having lost enough. His Grace half promised to be one of the party; but when the day came, just remembered the Shropshires were expected, and so was very sorry,—and the rest. Lady Aphrodite and himself parted with a warmth which remarkably contrasted with their late intercourse, and which neither of them could decide whether it were reviving affection or factitious effort.

M. de Whiskerburg and Count Frill departed with Sir Lucius, being extremely desirous to be initiated in the mysteries of the turf, and, above all, to see a real English jockey.

CHAPTER IV.

THE newspapers continued to announce the departures of new visitors to the Duke of St. James, and to dilate upon the protracted and princely festivity of Pen Bronnock. But while thousands were envying his lot, and hundreds aspiring to share it, what indeed was the condition of our hero?

A month or two had rolled on, and if he had not absolutely tasted enjoyment, at least he had thrust off reflection; but as the autumn wore away, and as each day he derived less diversion or distraction from the repetition of the same routine, carried on by different actors, he could no longer control feelings which would be predominant, and those feelings were not such as perhaps might have been expected from one who was receiving the homage of an admiring world. In a word, the Duke of St. James was the most miserable wretch that ever lived.

"Where is this to end?" he asked himself. "Is this year to close, to bring only a repetition of the past? Well, I have had it all—and what is it? My restless feelings are, at last, laid,—my indefinite appetites are, at length, exhausted. I have known this mighty world, and where am I? Once, all prospects, all reflections merged in the agitating, the tremulous and panting lust with which I sighed for it. Have I been deceived? Have I been disappointed? Is it different from what I expected? Has it fallen

short of my fancy? Has the dexterity of my musings deserted me? Have I under-acted the hero of my reveries? Have I, in short, mismanaged my début? Have I blundered? No, no, no! Far—far has it gone beyond even my imagination, and *my* life has, if no other, realised its ideas!

"Who laughs at me? Who does not burn incense before my shrine? What appetite have I not gratified? What gratification has proved bitter? My vanity! Has it been, for an instant, mortified? Am I not acknowledged the most brilliant hero of the most brilliant society in Europe? Intense as is my self-love, has it not been gorged? Luxury and splendour were my youthful dreams, and have I not realised the very romance of indulgence and magnificence? My career has been one long triumph. My palaces, and my gardens, and my jewels, my dress, my furniture, my equipages, my horses, and my festivals—these used to occupy my meditations, when I could only meditate—and have my determinations proved a delusion? Ask the admiring world.

"And now for the great point to which all this was to tend, which all this was to fascinate and subdue, to adorn, to embellish, to delight, to honour——Woman! Oh! when I first dared, among the fields of Eton, to dwell upon the soft yet agitating fancy, that some day my existence might perhaps be rendered more intense, by the admiration of these maddening but then mysterious creatures—could, could I have dreamt of what has happened? Is not this the very point in which my career has most out-topped my lofty hopes?

"I have read, and sometimes heard, of SATIETY. It must then be satiety that I feel; for I do feel more like a doomed man, than a young noble full of blood and youth. And yet satiety——it is a word. What then? A word is breath, and am I wiser? Satiety! Satiety! Satiety! Oh! give me happiness! Oh! give me love!

"Ay! there it is—I feel it now. Too well I feel, that happiness must spring from purer fountains than self-love. We are not born merely for ourselves, and they who, full of pride, make the trial, as I have done, and think that the world is made for them, and not for mankind, must come to as bitter results, perhaps as bitter a fate—for, by Heavens! I am half tempted at this moment to fling myself from off this cliff—and so end all.

"Why should I live? For virtue, and for duty—to compensate for all my folly, and to achieve some slight good end with my abused, and unparalleled means. Ay! it is all vastly rational, and vastly sublime,—but it is too late. I feel the exertion above me. I am a lost man.

"We cannot work without a purpose and an aim. I had mine,

although it was a false one, and I succeeded. Had I one now, I might succeed again—but my heart is a dull void. And Caroline, that gentle girl, will not give me what I want; and to offer her but half a heart, may break hers, and I would not bruise that delicate bosom to save my dukedom. Those sad, silly parents of hers have already done mischief enough,—but I will see Darrell, and will at least arrange that. I like him, and will make him my friend for her sake. God! God! why am I not loved! A word from her, and all would change. I feel a something in me, which could put all right. I have the will, and she could give the power.

"Now see what a farce life is! I shall go on, Heaven knows how! I cannot live long. Men like me soon bloom and fade. What I may come to, I dread to think. There is a dangerous facility in my temper—I know it well, for I know more of myself than people think—there is a dangerous facility which, with May Dacre, might be the best guarantee of virtue; but with all others—for all others are, at the best, weak things—will as certainly render me despicable, perhaps degraded. I hear the busy devil whispering even now. It is my demon. Now, I say, see what a farce life is! I shall die like a dog, as I have lived like a fool; and then my epitaph will be in everybody's mouth. Here are the consequences of self-indulgence: here is a fellow, forsooth, who thought only of the gratification of his vile appetites—and by the living Heaven, am I not standing here among my hereditary rocks, and sighing to the ocean, to be virtuous!

"She knew me well: she read me in a minute, and spoke more truth at that last meeting, than is in a thousand sermons. It is out of our power to redeem ourselves. Our whole existence is a false, foul state, totally inimical to love and purity, and domestic gentleness, and calm delight. Yet are we envied! Oh! could these fools see us at any other time, except surrounded by our glitter, and hear of us at any other moment, save in the first bloom of youth, which is, even then, often wasted,—could they but mark our manhood, and view our hollow marriages, and disappointed passions,—could they but see the traitors that we have for sons—the daughters that own no duty,—could they but watch us even to our grave, tottering after some fresh bauble, some vain delusion, which, to the last, we hope may prove a substitute for what we have never found through life—a contented mind,—they would do something else but envy us.

"But I stand prating, when I am wanted. I must home. Home! O sacred word! and then comes night! Horrible night! Horrible day! It seems to me I am upon the eve of some monstrous folly, too ridiculous to be a crime, and yet as fatal. I have

half a mind to go and marry the Bird of Paradise, out of pure pique with myself, and with the world."

CHAPTER V.

SOUTHEY, that virtuous man, whom Wisdom calls her own, somewhere thanks God that he was not born to a great estate. We quite agree with the seer of Keswick; it is a bore. Provided a man can enjoy every personal luxury, what profits it that your flag waves on castles you never visit, and that you count rents which you never receive? And yet, there are some things which your miserable, moderate incomes cannot command, and which one might like to have—for instance, a band.

A complete, a consummate band, in uniforms of uncut white velvet, with a highly-wrought gold button, just tipped with a single pink topaz, seems to me the τὸ καλὸν. When we die, "Band" will be found impressed upon our heart, like "frigate" on the core of Nelson. The negroes should have their noses bored, as well as their ears, and hung with rings of rubies. The kettle-drums should be of silver.

And with regard to a great estate, no doubt it brings great cares; or, to get free of them, the estate must be neglected, and then it is even worse. Elections come on, and all your members are thrown out: so much for neglected influence. Agricultural distress prevails, and all your farms are thrown up; so much for neglected tenants. Harassed by leases, renewals, railroads, fines, and mines, you are determined that life shall not be worn out by these continual and petty cares. Thinking it somewhat hard, that, because you have two hundred thousand a-year, you have neither ease nor enjoyment, you find a remarkably clever man, who manages everything for you. Enchanted with his energy, his acuteness, and his foresight; fascinated by your increasing rent-roll, and the total disappearance of arrears, you dub him your right hand, introduce him to all your friends, and put him into Parliament; and then, fired by the ambition of rivalling his patron, he disburses, embezzles, and decamps.

But where is our hero? Is he forgotten? Never! But in the dumps, blue devils, and so on. A little bilious, it may be, and dull. He scarcely would amuse you at this moment. So we come forward with a graceful bow—the Jack Pudding of our doctor who is behind.

In short, that is to say, in long,—for what is the use of this affected brevity? When this tale is done, what have you got? So let us make it last. We quite repent of having intimated so much: in future, it is our intention to develop more, and to describe, and to delineate, and to define, and, in short, to bore. You know the model of this kind of writing—Richardson, whom we shall revive. In future, we shall, as a novelist, take Clarendon's Rebellion for our guide, and write our hero's notes, or heroine's letters, like a state paper, or a broken treaty.

The Duke, and the young Duke—oh! to be a Duke, and to be young—it is too much—was seldom seen by the gay crowd who feasted in his hall. His mornings now were lonely, and if, at night, his eye still sparkled, and his step still sprang, why, between us, wine gave him beauty, and wine gave him grace.

It was the dreary end of dull November, and the last company were breaking off. The Bird of Paradise, according to her desire, had gone to Brighton, where his Grace had presented her with a tenement, neat, light, and finished; and though situated amid the wilds of Kemp Town, not more than one hyæna on a night ventured to come down from the adjacent heights. He had half promised to join her, because he thought he might as well be there as here, and consequently he had not invited a fresh supply of visitors from town, or rather from the country. As he was hesitating about what he should do, he received a letter from his bankers, which made him stare. He sent for the groom of the chambers, and was informed the house was clear, save that some single men still lingered, as is their wont. They never take a hint. His Grace ordered his carriage; and, more alive than he had been for the last two months, dashed off to town.

CHAPTER VI.

THE letter from his bankers informed the Duke of St. James that not only was the half million exhausted, but, in pursuance of their powers, they had sold out all his stock, and, in reliance on his credit, had advanced even beyond it. They were ready to accommodate him in every possible way, and to advance as much more as he could desire——at five per cent.! Sweet five per cent.! Oh! magical five per cent.! Lucky the rogue now, who gets three. Nevertheless, they thought it but proper to call his Grace's attention to the circumstance, and to put him in possession of the facts. Something unpleasant is coming, when men are anxious to tell the truth.

The Duke of St. James had never affected to be a man of business; still he had taken it for granted, that pecuniary embarrassment was not ever to be counted among his annoyances. He wanted something to do, and determined to look into his affairs, merely to amuse himself.

The bankers were most polite. They brought their books, also several packets of papers neatly tied up, and were ready to give every information. The Duke asked for results. He found that the turf, the Alhambra, the expenses of his outfit in purchasing the lease and furniture of his mansion, and the rest, had, with his expenditure, exhausted his first year's income; but he reconciled himself to this, because he chose to consider them extraordinary expenses. Then the festivities of Pen Bronnock counterbalanced the economy of his more scrambling life the preceding year; yet he had not exceeded his income——much. Then he came to Sir Carte's account. He began to get a little frightened. Two hundred and fifty thousand had been swallowed by Hauteville Castle; one hundred and twenty thousand by Hauteville House. Ninety-six thousand had been paid for furniture. There were also some awkward miscellanies which, in addition, exceeded the half million.

This was smashing work; but castles and palaces, particularly of the correctest style of architecture, are not to be had for nothing. The Duke had always devoted the half million to this object; but he had intended that sum to be sufficient. What puzzled and what annoyed him was a queer suspicion, that his resources had been exhausted without his result being obtained. He sent for Sir Carte, who gave every information, and assured him, that had he had the least idea that a limit was an object, he would have made his arrangements accordingly. As it was, he

assured the young Duke, that he would be the Lord of the most sumptuous and accurate castle, and of the most gorgeous and tasteful palace in Europe. He was proceeding with a cloud of words, when his employer cut him short, by a peremptory demand of the exact sum requisite for the completion of his plans. Sir Carte was confused, and requested time. The estimates should be sent in as quickly as possible. The clerks should sit up all night, and even his own rest should not be an object, any more than the Duke's purse. So they parted.

The Duke determined to run down to Brighton for change of scene. He promised his bankers to examine everything on his return; in the meantime, they were to make all necessary advances, and honour his drafts to any amount.

He found the city of chalk and shingles not quite so agreeable as last year. He discovered that it had no trees. There was there, also, just everybody that he did not wish to see. It was one great St. James' Street, and seemed only an anticipation of that very season which he dreaded. He was half inclined to go somewhere else, but could not fix upon any spot. London might be agreeable, as it was empty; but then those confounded accounts awaited him. The Bird of Paradise was a sad bore. He really began to suspect that she was little better than an idiot: then, she ate so much,—and he hated your eating women. He gladly shuffled her off on that fool Count Frill, who daily brought his guitar to Kemp Town. They just suited each other. What a madman he had been, to have embarrassed himself with this creature! It would cost him a pretty ransom now, before he could obtain his freedom. How we change! Already the Duke of St. James began to think of pounds, shillings, and pence. A year ago, so long as he could extricate himself from a scrape by force of cash, he thought himself a lucky fellow.

The Graftons had not arrived, but were daily expected. He really could not stand them. As for Lady Afy, he execrated the greenhornism which had made him feign a passion, and then get caught where he meant to capture. As for Sir Lucius, he wished to Heaven he would just take it into his head to repay him the fifteen thousand he had lent him at that confounded election, to say nothing of anything else.

Then, there was Burlington, with his old loves and his new dances. He wondered how the deuce that fellow could be amused with such frivolity, and always look so serene and calm. Then, there was Squib: that man never knew when to leave off joking; and Annesley, with his false refinement; and Darrell, with his petty ambition. He felt quite sick, and took a solitary ride: but he flew from Scylla to Charybdis. Mrs. Montfort could not forget

their many delightful canters last season to Rottingdean—and, lo! she was at his side:—he wished her down the cliff.

In this fit of the spleen, he went to the Theatre: there were eleven people in the boxes. He listened to "The School for Scandal." Never was slander more harmless. He sat it all out, and was sorry when it was over, but was consoled by the devils of Der Freischutz. How sincerely, how ardently did he long to sell himself to the demon! It was eleven o'clock, and he dreaded the play to be over, as if he were a child. What to do with himself, or where to go, he was equally at a loss. The door of the box opened, and entered Lord Bagshot. If it must be an acquaintance, this cub was better than any of his refined and lately cherished companions.

"Well, Bag, what are you doing with yourself?"

"Oh! I don't know: just looking in for a lark. Any game?"

"On my honour, I can't say."

"What's that girl? Oh! I see; that's little Wilkins. There's Moll Otway. Nothing new. I shall go and rattle the bones a little—eh! my boy?"

"Rattle the bones! what is that?"

"Don't you know?" and here this promising young peer manually explained his meaning.

"What do you play at?" asked the Duke.

"Hazard, for my money; but what you like."

"Where?"

"We meet at De Berghem's. There is a jolly set of us. All crack men. When my governor is here, I never go. He is so jealous. I suppose there must be only one gamester in the family, eh!—my covey!" Lord Bagshot, excited by the unusual affability of the young Duke, grew quite familiar.

"I have half a mind to look in with you," said his Grace, with a careless air.

"Oh! come along, by all means. They'll be devilish glad to see you. De Berghem was saying, the other day, what a nice fellow you were, and how he should like to know you. You don't know De Berghem, do you?"

"I have seen him. I know enough of him."

They quitted the Theatre together, and, under the guidance of Lord Bagshot, stopped at a door in Brunswick Terrace. There they found collected a numerous party, but all persons of consideration. The Baron, who had once been a member of the diplomatic corps, and now lived in England, by choice, on his pension and private fortune, received them with marked courtesy. Proud of his companion, Lord Bagshot's hoarse, coarse, idiot voice seemed ever braying. His frequent introductions of the

Duke of St. James were excruciating, and it required all the freezing of a finished manner to pass through this fiery ordeal. His Grace was acquainted with most of the guests by sight, and to some he even bowed. They were chiefly men of a certain age, with the exception of two or three young Peers like himself.

There was the Earl of Castlefort, plump and luxurious, with a youthful wig, who, though a sexagenarian, liked no companion better than a mirror. His Lordship was the most amiable man in the world, and the most lucky; but his first was his merit, and the second was not his fault. There was the juvenile Lord Dice, who, boasted of having done his brothers out of their miserable 5,000*l.* patrimony, and all in one night. But the wrinkle that had already ruffled his once clear brow, his sunken eye, and his convulsive lip, had been thrown, we suppose, into the bargain, and, in our opinion, made it a dear one. There was Temple Grace, who had run through four fortunes, and ruined four sisters. Withered, though only thirty, one thing alone remained to be lost—what he called his honour, which was already on the scent to play booty. There was Cogit, who, when he was drunk, swore that he had had a father; but this was deemed the only exception to *in vino veritas*. Who he was, the Goddess of Chance could alone decide; and we have often thought that he might bear the same relation to her, as Æneas to the Goddess of Beauty. His age was as great a mystery as anything else. He dressed still like a boy,—yet some vowed he was eighty. He must have been Salathiel. Property he never had,—and yet he contrived to live; connection he was not born with,—yet he was upheld by a set. He never played,—yet he was the most skilful dealer going. He did the honours of a *Rouge et Noir* table to a miracle; and looking, as he thought, most genteel in a crimson waistcoat and a gold chain, raked up the spoils, or complacently announced *après*. Lord Castlefort had few secrets from him: he was the jackal to these prowling beasts of prey; looked out for pigeons,—got up little parties to Richmond or Brighton—sang a song, when the rest were too anxious to make a noise, and yet desired a little life, and perhaps could cog a die, arrange a looking-glass, or mix a tumbler.

Unless the loss of an occasional Napoleon at a German watering-place is to be so stigmatised, gaming had never formed one of the numerous follies of the Duke of St. James. Rich, and gifted with a generous, sanguine, and luxurious disposition, he had never been tempted by the desire of gain, or, as some may perhaps maintain, by the desire of excitement, to seek assistance or enjoyment in a mode of life which stultifies all our fine fancies, deadens all our noble emotions, and mortifies all our beautiful aspirations.

We know that we are broaching a doctrine which many will

start at, and which some will protest against, when we declare our belief, that no person, whatever his apparent wealth, ever yet gamed, except from the prospect of immediate gain. We hear much of want of excitement, of ennui, of satiety; and then the gaming-table is announced as a sort of substitute for opium, wine, or any other mode of obtaining a more intense vitality at the cost of reason. Gaming is too active, too anxious, too complicated, too troublesome,—in a word, *too sensible* an affair for such spirits, who fly only to a sort of dreamy and indefinite distraction. The fact is, gaming is a matter of business. Its object is tangible, clear, and evident. There is nothing high, or inflammatory, or exciting; no false magnificence, no visionary elevation, in the affair at all. It is the very antipodes to enthusiasm of any kind. It pre-supposes in its votary a mind essentially mercantile. All the feelings that are in its train, are the most mean, the most commonplace, and the most annoying of daily life, and nothing would tempt the gamester to experience them, except the great object which, as a matter of calculation, he is willing to aim at on such terms. No man flies to the gambling-table in a paroxysm. The first visit requires the courage of a forlorn hope. The first stake will make the lightest mind anxious, the firmest hand tremble, and the stoutest heart falter. After the first stake, it is all a matter of calculation and management, even in games of chance. Night after night will men play at *Rouge et Noir*, upon what they call a system, and for hours their attention never ceases, any more than it would if they were in the shop, or on the wharf. No manual labour is more fatiguing, and more degrading to the labourer, than gaming. Every gamester feels ashamed. And this vice, this worst vice, from whose embrace, moralists daily inform us, man can never escape, is just the one from which the majority of men most completely, and most often, emancipate themselves. Infinite are the men who have lost thousands in their youth, and never dream of chance again. It is this pursuit which, oftener than any other, leads man to self-knowledge. Appalled by the absolute destruction on the verge of which he finds his early youth just stepping; aghast at the shadowy crimes which, under the influence of this life, seem, as it were, to rise upon his soul, often he hurries to emancipate himself from this fatal thraldom, and with a ruined fortune, and marred prospects, yet thanks his Creator that his soul is still white, his conscience clear, and that, once more, he breathes the sweet air of heaven.

And our young Duke, we must confess, gamed, as all other men have gamed—for money. His satiety had fled the moment that his affairs were embarrassed. The thought suddenly came into his head, while Bagshot was speaking. He determined to make an

effort to recover: and so completely was it a matter of business with him, that he reasoned, that in the present state of his affairs, a few thousands more would not signify,—that these few thousands might lead to vast results, and that, if they did, he would bid adieu to the gaming-table with the same coolness with which he had saluted it.

Yet he felt a little odd, when he first "rattled the bones;" and his affected nonchalance made him constrained. He fancied every one was watching him; while, on the contrary, all were too much interested in their own different parties. This feeling, however, wore off.

According to every novelist, and the moralists "our betters," the Duke of St. James should have been fortunate at least to-night. You always win, at first, you know. If so, we advise said children of fancy and of fact to pocket their gains, and not play again. The young Duke had not the opportunity of thus acting. He lost fifteen hundred pounds, and at half-past five he quitted the Baron's.

Hot, bilious, with a confounded twang in his mouth, and a cracking pain in his head, he stood one moment and sniffed in the salt sea breeze. The moon was unfortunately on the waters, and her cool, beneficent light reminded him, with disgust, of the hot, burning glare of the Baron's saloon. He thought of May Dacre, but clenched his fist, and drove her image from his mind.

CHAPTER VII.

He rose late, and as he was lounging over his breakfast, entered Lord Bagshot and the Baron. Already the young Duke began to experience one of the gamester's curses,—the intrusive society of those of whom you are ashamed. Eight-and-forty hours ago, Lord Bagshot would no more have dared to call upon the Duke of St. James, than to call at the Pavilion; and now, with that reckless want of tact which marks the innately vulgar, he seemed to triumph in their unhallowed intimacy, and lounging into his Grace's apartment with that half-shuffling, half-swaggering air indicative of the "cove," hat cocked, and thumbs in his great-coat pockets, cast his complacent eye around, and praised his Grace's "rooms." Lord Bagshot, who for the occasional notice of the Duke of St. James, had been so long a ready and patient butt, now appeared to assume a higher character, and addressed

his friend in a tone and manner which were authorised by the equality of their rank, and the sympathy of their tastes. If this change had taken place in the conduct of the Viscount, it was not a singular one. The Duke also, to his surprise, found himself addressing his former butt in a very different style from that which he had assumed in the ball-room of Doncaster. In vain, he tried to rally,—in vain, he tried to snub. It was indeed in vain. He no longer possessed any right to express his contempt of his companion. That contempt, indeed, he still felt. He despised Lord Bagshot still, but he also despised himself.

The soft and silky Baron was a very different sort of personage; but there was something sinister in all his elaborate courtesy and highly artificial manner, which did not touch the feelings of the Duke, whose courtesy was but the expression of his noble feelings, and whose grace was only the impulse of his rich and costly blood. Baron de Berghem was too attentive, and too deferential. He smiled and bowed too much. He made no allusion to the last night's scene, nor did his tutored companion, but spoke of very different and lighter subjects, in a manner which at once proved his experience of society, the liveliness of his talents, and the cultivation of his taste. He told many stories, all very short and poignant, and always about princes or princesses. Whatever was broached, he always had his *apropos* of Vienna, and altogether seemed an experienced, mild, tolerant man of the world, not bigoted to any particular opinions upon any subject, but of a truly liberal and philosophic mind.

When they had sat chatting for half an hour, the Baron developed the object of his visit, which was to endeavour to obtain the pleasure of his Grace's company at dinner; to taste some wild boar, and try some tokay. The Duke, who longed again for action, accepted the invitation; and then they parted.

Our hero was quite surprised at the feverish anxiety with which he awaited the hour of union. He thought that seven o'clock would never come. He had no appetite at breakfast, and after that he rode, but luncheon was a blank. In the midst of the operation, he found himself in a brown study, calculating chances. All day long, his imagination had been playing Hazard, or *Rouge et Noir*. Once, he thought that he had discovered an infallible way of winning at the latter. On the long run, he was convinced it must answer, and he panted to prove it.

Seven o'clock at last arrived, and he departed to Brunswick Terrace. There was a brilliant party to meet him: the same set as last night, but select. He was faint, and did justice to the *cuisine* of his host, which was indeed remarkable. When we are drinking a man's good wine, it is difficult to dislike him. Preju-

dice decreases with every draught. His Grace began to think the Baron as good-hearted as agreeable. He was grateful for the continued attentions of old Castlefort, who, he now found out, had been very well acquainted with his father, and once even made a trip to Spa with him. Lord Dice he could not manage to endure, though that worthy was, for him, remarkably courteous, and grinned with his parchment face, like a good-humoured ghoul. Temple Grace and the Duke became almost intimate. There was an amiable candour in that gentleman's address, a softness in his tones, and an unstudied and extremely interesting delicacy in his manner, which in this society was remarkable. Tom Cogit never presumed to come near the young Duke, but paid him constant attention. He sat at the bottom of the table, and was ever sending a servant with some choice wine, or recommending him, through some third person, some choice dish. It is pleasant to be "made much of," as Shakspeare says, even by scoundrels. To be king of your company, is a poor ambition,—yet homage is homage, and smoke is smoke—whether it come out of the chimney of a palace, or of a workhouse.

The banquet was not hurried. Though all wished it finished, no one liked to appear urgent. It was over at last, and they walked up-stairs, where the tables were arranged for all parties, and all play. Tom Cogit went up a few minutes before them, like the lady of the mansion, to review the lights, and arrange the cards. Feminine Tom Cogit!

The events of to-night were much the same as of the preceding one. The Duke was a loser, but his losses were not considerable. He retired about the same hour, with a head not so hot, or heavy; and he never looked at the moon, or thought of May Dacre. The only wish that reigned in his soul was a longing for another opportunity, and he had agreed to dine with the Baron, before he left Brunswick Terrace.

Thus passed a week—one night the Duke of St. James redeeming himself, another falling back to his old position, now pushing on to Madrid, now re-crossing the Tagus. On the whole, he had lost four or five thousand pounds, a mere trifle to what, as he had heard, had been lost and gained by many of his companions during only the present season. On the whole, he was one of the most moderate of these speculators, generally played at the large table, and never joined any of those private coteries, some of which he had observed, and of some of which he had heard. Yet this was from no prudential resolve or temperate resolution. The young Duke was heartily tired of the slight results of all his anxiety, hopes, and plans, and ardently wished for some opportunity of coming to closer and more decided action. The Baron also had

resolved, that an end should be put to this skirmishing,—but he was a calm head, and never hurried anything.

"I hope your Grace has been lucky to-night!" said the Baron one evening, strolling up to the Duke: "as for myself, really, if Dice goes on playing, I shall give up banking. That fellow must have a talisman. I think he has broken more banks than any man living. The best thing he did of that kind was the Roulette story at Paris. You have heard of that?"

"Was that Lord Dice!"

"Oh, yes! he does everything. He must have cleared his hundred thousand last year. I have suffered a good deal since I have been in England. Castlefort has pulled in a great deal of my money. I wonder to whom he will leave his property?"

"You think him rich?"

"Oh! he will cut up very large!" said the Baron, elevating his eyebrows. "A pleasant man too! I do not know any man that I would sooner play with than Castlefort—no one who loses his money with better temper."

"Or wins it," said his Grace.

"That we all do," said the Baron, faintly laughing. "Your Grace has lost, and you do not seem particularly dull. You will have your revenge. Those who lose at first are always the children of fortune. I always dread a man who loses at first. All I beg is, that you will not break my bank."

"Why! you see I am not playing now."

"I am not surprised. There is too much heat and noise here," said he. "We will have a quiet dinner some day, and play at our ease. Come to-morrow, and I will ask Castlefort and Dice. I should uncommonly like, *entre nous*, to win some of their money. I will take care that nobody shall be here whom you would not like to meet. By-the-bye, whom were you riding with this morning? Fine woman!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE young Duke had accepted the invitation of the Baron de Berghem for to-morrow, and accordingly, himself, Lords Castlefort and Dice, and Temple Grace, assembled in Brunswick Terrace at the usual hour. The dinner was studiously plain, and very little wine was drunk; yet everything was perfect. Tom Cogit stepped in to carve, in his usual silent manner. He always came in and went out of a room without any one observing him. He winked familiarly to Temple Grace, but scarcely presumed to bow to the Duke. He was very busy about the wine, and dressed the wild fowl in a manner quite unparalleled. Tom Cogit was the man for a sauce for a brown bird. What a mystery he made of it! Cayenne, and Burgundy, and limes were ingredients, but there was a magic in the incantation, with which he alone was acquainted. He took particular care to send a most perfect portion to the young Duke, and he did this, as he paid all attentions to influential strangers, with the most marked consciousness of the sufferance which permitted his presence: never addressing his Grace, but audibly whispering to the servant, "Take this to the Duke;" or asking the attendant, "whether his Grace would try the Hermitage?"

After dinner, with the exception of Cogit, who was busied in compounding some wonderful liquid for the future refreshment, they sat down to Ecarté. Without having exchanged a word upon the subject, there seemed a general understanding among all the parties, that to-night was to be a pitched battle, and they began at once, very briskly. Yet, in spite of their universal determination, midnight arrived without anything very decisive. Another hour passed over, and then Tom Cogit kept touching the Baron's elbow, and whispering in a voice which everybody could understand. All this meant, that supper was ready. It was brought into the room.

Gaming has one advantage—it gives you an appetite; that is to say, so long as you have a chance remaining. The Duke had thousands,—for at present, his resources were unimpaired, and he was exhausted by the constant attention and anxiety of five hours. He passed over the delicacies, and went to the side-table, and began cutting himself some cold roast beef. Tom Cogit ran up, not to his Grace, but to the Baron, to announce the shocking fact, that the Duke of St. James was enduring great trouble; and then the Baron asked his Grace to permit Mr. Cogit to serve him. Our hero devoured—we use the word advisedly, as fools say in the House of Commons—he devoured the roast beef, and rejecting the Hermitage with disgust, asked for porter.

They set to again, fresh as eagles. At six o'clock, accounts were so complicated, that they stopped to make up their books. Each played with his memorandums and pencil at his side. Nothing fatal had yet happened. The Duke owed Lord Dice about five thousand pounds, and Temple Grace owed him as many hundreds. Lord Castlefort also was his debtor, to the tune of seven hundred and fifty, and the Baron was in his books, but slightly. Every half hour they had a new pack of cards, and threw the used one on the floor. All this time, Tom Cogit did nothing but snuff the candles, stir the fire, bring them a new pack, and occasionally make a tumbler for them. At eight o'clock, the Duke's situation was worsened. The run was greatly against him, and perhaps his losses were doubled. He pulled up again the next hour or two; but nevertheless, at ten o'clock, owed every one something. No one offered to give over; and every one, perhaps, felt that his object was not obtained. They made their toilets, and went down-stairs to breakfast. In the meantime, the shutters were opened, the room aired; and in less than an hour, they were at it again.

They played till dinner-time without intermission; and though the Duke made some desperate efforts, and some successful ones, his losses were, nevertheless, trebled. Yet he ate an excellent dinner, and was not at all depressed; because the more he lost, the more his courage and his resources seemed to expand. At first, he had limited himself to ten thousand; after breakfast, it was to have been twenty thousand; then, thirty thousand was the ultimatum; and now he dismissed all thoughts of limits from his mind, and was determined to risk or gain everything.

At midnight, he had lost forty-eight thousand pounds. Affairs now began to be serious. His supper was not so hearty. While the rest were eating, he walked about the room, and began to limit his ambition to recovery, and not to gain. When you play to win back, the fun is over: there is nothing to recompense you for your bodily tortures and your degraded feelings; and the very best result that can happen, while it has no charms, seems to your cowed mind impossible.

On they played, and the Duke lost more. His mind was jaded. He floundered—he made desperate efforts, but plunged deeper in the slough. Feeling that, to regain his ground, each card must tell, he acted on each as if it must win, and the consequences of this insanity (for a gamester, at such a crisis, is really insane) were, that his losses were prodigious.

Another morning came, and there they sat, ankle deep in cards. No attempt at breakfast now—no affectation of making a toilet, or airing the room. The atmosphere was hot, to be sure, but it

well became such a Hell. There they sat, in total, in positive forgetfulness of everything but the hot game they were hunting down. There was not a man in the room, except Tom Cogit, who could have told you the name of the town in which they were living. There they sat, almost breathless, watching every turn with the fell look in their cannibal eyes, which showed their total inability to sympathise with their fellow-beings. All forms of society had been long forgotten. There was no snuff-box handed about now, for courtesy, admiration, or a pinch; no affectation of occasionally making a remark upon any other topic but the all-engrossing one. Lord Castlefort rested with his arms on the table:—a false tooth had got unhinged. His Lordship, who, at any other time, would have been most annoyed, coolly put it in his pocket. His cheeks had fallen, and he looked twenty years older. Lord Dice had torn off his cravat, and his hair hung down over his callous, bloodless cheeks, straight as silk. Temple Grace looked as if he were blighted by lightning; and his deep blue eyes gleamed like a hyæna. The Baron was least changed. Tom Cogit, who smelt that the crisis was at hand, was as quiet as a bribed rat.

On they played till six o'clock in the evening, and then they agreed to desist till after dinner. Lord Dice threw himself on a sofa. Lord Castlefort breathed with difficulty. The rest walked about. While they were resting on their oars, the young Duke roughly made up his accounts. He found that he was minus about one hundred thousand pounds.

Immense as this loss was, he was more struck,—more appalled, let us say,—at the strangeness of the surrounding scene, than even by his own ruin. As he looked upon his fellow gamesters, he seemed, for the first time in his life, to gaze upon some of those hideous demons of whom he had read. He looked in the mirror at himself. A blight seemed to have fallen over his beauty, and his presence seemed accursed. He had pursued a dissipated, even more than a dissipated career. Many were the nights that had been spent by him not on his couch; great had been the exhaustion that he had often experienced; haggard had sometimes even been the lustre of his youth. But when had been marked upon his brow this harrowing care? when had his features before been stamped with this anxiety, this anguish, this baffled desire, this strange, unearthly scowl, which made him even tremble? What! was it possible?——it could not be——that in time he was to be like those awful, those unearthly, those unhallowed things that were around him. He felt as if he had fallen from his state,—as if he had dishonoured his ancestry,—as if he had betrayed his trust. He felt a criminal. In the darkness of his meditations, a flash burst from his lurid mind,—a celestial light appeared to

dissipate this thickening gloom, and his soul felt as if it were bathed with the softening radiancy. He thought of May Dacre, he thought of everything that was pure, and holy, and beautiful, and luminous, and calm. It was the innate virtue of the man that made this appeal to his corrupted nature. His losses seemed nothing; his dukedom would be too slight a ransom for freedom from these ghouls, and for the breath of the sweet air.

He advanced to the Baron, and expressed his desire to play no more. There was an immediate stir. All jumped up, and now the deed was done. Cant, in spite of their exhaustion, assumed her reign. They begged him to have his revenge,—were quite annoyed, at the result,—had no doubt he would recover if he proceeded. Without noticing their remarks, he seated himself at the table, and wrote cheques for their respective amounts, Tom Cogit jumping up and bringing him the inkstand. Lord Castlefort, in the most affectionate manner, pocketed the draft; at the same time recommending the Duke not to be in a hurry, but to send it when he was cool. Lord Dice received his with a bow,—Temple Grace, with a sigh,—the Baron, with an avowal of his readiness always to give him his revenge.

The Duke, though sick at heart, would not leave the room with any evidence of a broken spirit; and when Lord Castlefort again repeated, "Pay us when we meet again," he said, "I think it very improbable that we shall meet again, my Lord. I wished to know what gaming was. I had heard a great deal about it. It is not so very disgusting; but I am a young man, and cannot play tricks with my complexion."

He reached his house. The Bird was out. He gave orders for himself not to be disturbed, and he went to bed; but in vain he tried to sleep. What rack exceeds the torture of an excited brain, and an exhausted body? His hands and feet were like ice, his brow like fire; his ears rung with supernatural roaring; a nausea had seized upon him, and death he would have welcomed. In vain, in vain he courted repose; in vain, in vain he had recourse to every expedient to wile himself to slumber. Each minute he started from his pillow with some phrase which reminded him of his late fearful society. Hour after hour moved on with its leaden pace; each hour he heard strike, and each hour seemed an age. Each hour was only a signal to cast off some covering, or shift his position. It was, at length, morning. With a feeling that he should go mad if he remained any longer in bed, he rose, and paced his chamber. The air refreshed him. He threw himself on the floor; the cold crept over his senses, and he slept.

CHAPTER IX.

O, ye immortal Gods!—ye are still immortal, although no longer ye hover o'er Olympus. The Crescent glitters on your mountain's base, and Crosses spring from out its toppling crags. But in vain the Mufti, and the Patriarch, and the Pope, flout at your past traditions. They are married to man's memory by the sweetest chain that ever Fancy wove for Love. The poet is a priest, who does not doubt the inspiration of his oracles; and your shrines are still served by a faithful band, who love the beautiful and adore the glorious! In vain, in vain, they tell us your divinity is a dream. From the cradle to the grave, our thoughts and feelings take their colour from you! O! Ægiochus, the birch has often proved thou art still a thunderer; and, although thy twanging bow murmur no longer through the avenging air, many an apple twig still indicates thy outraged dignity, pulcher Apollo!

O, ye immortal Gods! nothing so difficult as to begin a chapter, and therefore have we flown to you. In literature, as in life, it is the first step—you know the rest. After a paragraph or so, our blood is up, and even our jaded hackneys scud along, and warm up into friskiness.

The Duke awoke: another day of his eventful life is now to run its course. He found that the Bird of Paradise had not returned from an excursion to a neighbouring park: he left a note for her, apprising her of his departure to London, and he despatched a very affectionate letter to Lady Aphrodite, which was the least that he could do, considering that he perhaps quitted Brighton the day of her arrival. And having done all this, he ordered his horses, and before noon was on his first stage.

It was his birthday. He had completed his twenty-third year. This was sufficient, even if he had no other inducement, to make him indulge in some slight reflection. These annual summings up are awkward things, even to the prosperous and the happy, but to those who are the reverse, who are discontented with themselves, and find that youth melting away, which they believe can alone achieve anything, I think a birthday is about the most gloomy four-and-twenty hours that ever flap their damp, dull wings over melancholy man.

Yet the Duke of St. James was rather thoughtful than melancholy. His life had been too active of late to allow him to indulge much in that passive mood. "I may never know what happiness is," thought his Grace as he leaned back in his whirling britzska,

"but I think I know what happiness is not. It is not the career which I have hitherto pursued. All this excitement which they talk of so much, wears out the mind, and, I begin to believe, even the body, for certainly my energies seem deserting me. But two years, two miserable years, four-and-twenty months, eight-and-forty times the hours, the few hours, that I have been worse than wasting here, and I am shipwrecked—fairly bulged. Yet I have done everything, tried everything, and my career has been an eminent career. Woe to the wretch who trusts to his pampered senses for felicity! Woe to the wretch who flies from the bright goddess Sympathy, to sacrifice before the dark idol Self-love! Ah! I see too late, we were made for each other. Too late, I discover the beautiful results of this great principle of creation. Oh! the blunders of an unformed character! Oh! the torture of an ill-regulated mind!

"Give me a life with no fierce alternations of rapture and anguish,—no impossible hopes,—no mad depression. Free me from the delusions which succeed each other like scentless roses, that are ever blooming. Save me from the excitement which brings exhaustion, and from the passion that procreates remorse. Give me the luminous mind, where recognised and paramount duty dispels the harassing, ascertains the doubtful, confirms the wavering, sweetens the bitter. Give me content. Oh! give me love!

"How is it to end? What is to become of me? Can nothing rescue me? Is there no mode of relief, no place of succour, no quarter of refuge, no hope of salvation? I cannot right myself, and there is an end of it. Society, society, society! I owe thee much; and perhaps in working in thy service, those feelings might be developed which I am now convinced are the only source of happiness—but I am plunged too deep in the quag. I have no impulse, no call. I know not how it is, but my energies, good and evil, seem alike vanishing. There stares that fellow at my carriage! God! willingly would I break the stones upon the road for a year, to clear my mind of all the past!"

A carriage dashed by, and a lady bowed. It was Mrs. Dallington Vere.

The Duke had appointed his banker to dine with him, as not a moment must be lost in preparing for the reception of his Brighton drafts. He was also to receive, this evening, a complete report of all his affairs. The first thing that struck his eye on his table was a packet from Sir Carte Blanche. He opened it eagerly, stared, started, nearly shrieked. It fell from his hands. He was fortunately alone. The estimates for the completion of his works, and the purchase of the rest of the furniture, exactly equalled the sum already expended. Sir Carte added, that the works might

of course be stopped, but that there was no possible way of reducing them, with any deference to the original design, scale, and style; that he had already given instructions not to proceed with the furniture until further notice, but regretted to observe, that the orders were so advanced that he feared it was too late to make any sensible reduction. It might, in some degree, reconcile his Grace to this report, when he concluded by observing, that the advanced state of the works could permit him to guarantee that the present estimates would not be exceeded.

The Duke had sufficiently recovered before the arrival of his confidential agent not to appear agitated, only serious. The awful catastrophe at Brighton was announced, and his report of affairs was received. It was a very gloomy one. Great agricultural distress prevailed, and the rents could not be got in. Five-and-twenty per cent. was the least that must be taken off his income, and with no prospect of being speedily added on. There was a projected railroad which would entirely knock up his canal, and even if crushed, must be expensively opposed. Coals were falling also, and the duties in town increasing. There was sad confusion in the Irish estates. The missionaries, who were patronised on the neighbouring lands of one of the City Companies, had been exciting fatal confusion. Chapels were burnt, crops destroyed, stock butchered, and rents all in arrear. Mr. Dacre had contrived with great prudence to repress the efforts of the new reformation, and had succeeded in preventing any great mischief. His plans for the pursual of his ideas and feelings upon this subject had been communicated to his late ward in an urgent and important paper, which his Grace had never seen, but one day, unread, pushed into a certain black cabinet, which perhaps the reader may remember. His Grace's miscellaneous debts had also been called in, and amounted to a greater sum than they had anticipated, which debts always do. One hundred and forty thousand pounds had crumbled away in the most imperceptible manner. A very great slice of this was the portion of the jeweller. His shield and his vases would at least be evidence to his posterity, of the splendour and the taste of their imprudent ancestor; but he observed the other items with less satisfaction. He discovered that in the course of two years he had given away one hundred and thirty-seven necklaces and bracelets; and as for rings, they must be counted by the bushel. The result of this gloomy interview was, that the Duke had not only managed to get rid of the immortal half million, but had incurred debts or engagements to the amount of nearly eight hundred thousand pounds, incumbrances which were to be borne by a decreased and perhaps decreasing income.

His Grace was once more alone.

"Well! my brain is not turned;—and yet, I think, it has been pretty well worked these last few days. It cannot be true:—it must all be a dream. He never could have dined here, and said all this. Have I, indeed, been at Brighton? No, no, no,—I have been sleeping after dinner. I have a good mind to ring and ask whether he really was here. It must be one great delusion. But no!—there are those cursed accounts. Well! what does it signify? I was miserable before, and now I am only contemptible in addition. How the world will laugh! They were made forsooth for my diversion. O, idiot! you will be the butt of every one! Talk of Bagshot, indeed!—Why, he will scarcely speak to me!

"Away with this! Let me turn these things in my mind. Take it at one hundred and fifty thousand. It is more—it must be more: but we will take it at that. Now, suppose one hundred thousand is allotted every year to meet my debts; I suppose, in nine or ten years I shall be free. Not that freedom will be worth much then; but still I am thinking of the glory of the House I have betrayed. Well, then, there is fifty thousand a-year left. Let me see: twenty thousand have always been spent in Ireland, and ten at Pen Bronnock—and they must not be cut down. The only thing I can do now is, not to spare myself. I am the cause, and let me meet the consequences. Well, then, perhaps twenty thousand a-year remain to keep Hauteville Castle and Hauteville House; to maintain the splendour of the Duke of St. James. Why, my hereditary charities alone amount to a quarter of my income, to say nothing of incidental charges:—I too, who should and who would wish to rebuild, at my own cost, every bridge that is swept away, and every steeple that is burnt in my county.

"And now for the great point. Shall I proceed with my buildings? My own personal convenience whispers—no! But I have a strong conviction that the advice is treasonable. What! the young Duke's folly for every gazer in town and country to sneer at! Oh! my fathers, am I indeed your child, or am I bastard? Never, never shall your shield be sullied while I bear it! Never shall your proud banner veil while I am chieftain! They shall be finished—certainly, they shall be finished, if I die an exile! There can be no doubt about this; I feel the deep propriety.

"This girl, too—something must be done for her. I must get Squib to run down to Brighton for me: and Afy,—poor dear Afy, I think she will be sorry when she hears it all!

"My head is weak: I want a counsellor. This man cannot enter into my feelings. Then, there is my family lawyer. If I ask him for advice, he will ask me for instructions. Besides, this

is not a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence; it is an affair as much of sentiment as economy; it involves the honour of my family—and I want one to unburthen myself to, who can sympathise with the tortured feelings of a Noble—of a Duke without a dukedom—for it has come to that. But I will leave sneers to the world.

"There is Annesley. He is clever, but so cold-blooded. He has no heart. There is Squib; he is a good fellow, and has heart enough; and I suppose, if I wanted to pension off a mistress, or compound with a few rascally tradesmen, he would manage the affair to a miracle. There is Darrell; but he will be so fussy, and confidential, and official. Every meeting will be a cabinet council, every discussion a debate, every memorandum a state paper. There is Burlington; he is experienced, and clever, and kind-hearted, and, I really think, likes me;—but,—no, no, it is too ridiculous. We who have only met for enjoyment, whose countenance was a smile, and whose conversation was badinage; we to meet, and meditate on my broken fortunes! Impossible!" Besides, what right have I to compel a man, the study of whose life is to banish care, to take all my anxieties on his back, or refuse the duty at the cost of my acquaintance, and the trouble of his conscience. Ah! I once had a friend, the best, the wisest—but no more of that. What is even the loss of fortune and of consideration to the loss of his—his daughter's love?"

His voice faltered, yet it was long before he retired; and he rose on the morrow only to meditate over his harassing embarrassments. As if the cup of his misery were not o'erflowing, a new incident occurred about this time, which rendered his sense of them even keener. But this is important enough to commence a new chapter.

CHAPTER X

WILLIAM HENRY, MARQUESS OF MARYLEBONE, completed his twenty-first year—an event which created a greater sensation among the aristocracy of England, even, than the majority of George Augustus Frederick, Duke of St. James. The rent-roll of his Grace was great; but that of his Lordship was incalculable. He had not indeed so many castles as our hero; but then, in the metropolis, a whole parish owned him as Lord; and it was whispered, that when a few miles of leases fell in, the very Civil List must give him the wall. Even in the duration of his minority, he had the superiority over the young Duke, for the Marquess was a posthumous son.

Lord Marylebone was a short, thick, swarthy young gentleman, with wiry black hair, a nose somewhat flat, sharp eyes, and tusky mouth—altogether not very unlike a terrier. His tastes were unknown: he had not travelled, nor done anything very particular, except with a few congenial spirits, beat the Guards in a rowing-match,—a pretty diversion, and almost as conducive to a small, white hand, as almond paste.

But his Lordship was now of age, and might be seen every day at a certain hour rattling up Bond Street in a red drag, in which he drove four or five particular friends who lived at Stevens' hotel, and therefore, we suppose, were the partners of his glory in his victory over his Majesty's household troops. Lord Marylebone was the universal subject of conversation. Pursuits which would have devoted a shabby Earl of twelve or fifteen thousand a-year to universal reprobation, or, what is much worse, to universal sneers, assumed quite a different character, when they constituted the course of life of this fortunate youth. He was a delightful young man. So unaffected! No super-refinement, no false delicacy. Every one, every sex, everything, extended his, her, or its hand to this cub, who, quite puzzled, but too brutal to be confused, kept driving on the red van, and each day perpetrating some new act of profligacy, some new instance of coarse profusion, tasteless extravagance, and inelegant eccentricity.

But, nevertheless, he was the hero of the town. He was the great point of interest in "The Universe," and "The New World" favoured the old one with weekly articles on his character and conduct. The young Duke was quite forgotten, if really young he could be longer called. Lord Marylebone was in the mouth of every tradesman, who authenticated his own vile inventions by foisting them on his Lordship. The most grotesque fashions sud-

denly inundated the metropolis; and when the Duke of St. Jame ventured to express his disapprobation, he found his empire was over. "They were sorry that it did not meet his Grace's taste, but really what his Grace had suggested was quite gone by. This was the only hat, or cane, or coat, which any civilised being could be seen with. Lord Marylebone wore, or bore, no other."

In higher circles, it was much the same. Although the dandies would not bate an inch, and certainly would not elect the young Marquess for their leader, they found, to their dismay, that the empire which they were meditating to defend, had already slipped away from their grasp. A new race of adventurous youths appeared upon the stage. Beards, and great-coats even rougher, bull-dogs instead of poodles, clubs instead of canes, cigars instead of perfumes, were the order of the day. There was no end to boat-racing; Crockford's sneered at White's; and there was even a talk of reviving the ring. Even the women patronised the young Marquess, and those who could not be blind to his real character, were sure that, if well managed, he would not turn out ill.

Assuredly, our hero, though shelved, did not envy his successful rival. Had he been, instead of one for whom he felt a sovereign contempt, a being even more accomplished than himself, pity and not envy would have been the sentiment he would have yielded to his ascendant star. But, nevertheless, he could not be insensible to the results of this incident; and the advent of the young Marquess seemed like the sting in the epigram of his life. After all his ruinous magnificence, after all the profuse indulgence of his fantastic tastes, he had sometimes consoled himself, even in the bitterness of satiety, by reminding himself, that he, at least, commanded the admiration of his fellow-creatures, although it had been purchased at a costly price. Not insensible to the power of his wealth, the magic of his station, he had, however, ventured to indulge in the sweet belief, that these qualities were less concerned in the triumphs of his career, than his splendid person, his accomplished mind, his amiable disposition, and his finished manner; his beauty, his wit, his goodness, and his grace. Even from this delusion, too, was he to waken, and, for the first time in his life, he gauged the depth and strength of that popularity which had been so dear to him, and which he now found to be so shallow and so weak.

"What will they think of me when they know all! What they will: I care not. I would sooner live in a cottage with May Dacre, and work for our daily bread, than be worshipped by all the beauty of this Babylon."

Gloomy, yet sedate, he returned home. His letters announced

two extraordinary events. M. de Whiskerburg had galloped off with Lady Aphrodite, and Count Frill had flown away with the Bird of Paradise.

CHAPTER XI.

THE last piece of information was a relief; but the announcement of the elopement cost him a pang. Both surprised, and the first shocked him. We are unreasonable in love, and do not like to be anticipated even in neglect. An hour ago, Lady Aphrodite Grafton was to him only an object of anxiety and a cause of embarrassment. She was now a being to whom he was indebted for some of the most pleasing hours of his existence, and who could no longer contribute to his felicity. Everybody appeared deserting him.

He had neglected her, to be sure; and they must have parted, it was certain. Yet although the present event saved him from the most harrowing of scenes, he could not refrain shedding a tear. So good! and so beautiful!——and was this her end? He, who knew all, knew how bitter had been the lot of her life.

It is certain, that when one of your very virtuous women ventures to be a little indiscreet, we say it is certain, though we regret it, that sooner or later there is an explosion. And the reason is this, that they are always in a hurry to make up for lost time, and so love with them becomes a business instead of being a pleasure. Nature had intended Lady Aphrodite Grafton for a Psyche, so spiritual was her soul, so pure her blood! Art, that is education, which at least should be an art, though it is not,—art had exquisitely sculptured the precious gem that Nature had developed, and all that was wanting was love to stamp an impression. Lady Aphrodite Grafton might have been as perfect a character as was ever the heroine of a novel:—and to whose account shall we place her blighted fame and sullied lustre? To that animal, who seems formed only to betray woman. Her husband was a traitor in disguise. She found herself betrayed; but, like a noble chieftain, when her capital was lost, maintained herself among the ruins of her happiness, in the citadel of her virtue. She surrendered, she thought, on terms, and in yielding her heart to the young Duke, though never for a moment blind to her conduct, yet memory whispered extenuation, and love added——all that was necessary.

Our hero (we are for none of your perfect heroes) did not behave much better than her husband. The difference between

them was, Sir Lucius Grafton's character was formed, and formed for evil; while the Duke of St. James, when he became acquainted with Lady Aphrodite, possessed none. Gallantry was a habit, in which he had been brought up. To protest to woman what he did not believe, and to feign what he did not feel, was, as he supposed, parts in the character of an accomplished gentleman; and as hitherto he had not found his career productive of any misery, we may perhaps view his conduct with less severity. But, at length, he approaches,—not a mere woman of the world, who tries to delude him into the idea, that he is the first hero of a romance that has been a hundred times repeated. He trembles at the responsibility which he has incurred by engaging the feelings of another. In the conflict of his emotions, some rays of moral light break upon his darkened soul. Profligacy brings its own punishment, and he feels keenly that man is the subject of sympathy, and not the slave of self-love.

This remorse protracts a connection, which each day is productive of more painful feelings; but the heart cannot be overstrung, and anxiety ends in callousness. Then come neglect, remonstrance, explanations, protestations, and, sooner or later, a catastrophe.

But love is a dangerous habit, and when once indulged, is not easily thrown off, unless you become devout, which is, in a manner, giving the passion a new direction. In Catholic countries, it is surprising how many adventures end in a convent. A dame, in her desperation, flies to the grate, which never reopens: but in Protestant regions, she has time to cool, and that's the deuce; so, instead of taking the veil, she takes——a new lover.

Lady Aphrodite had worked up her mind, and the young Duke, to a step, the very mention of which, a year before, would have made him shudder. What an enchanter is Passion! No wonder Ovid, who was a judge, made love so much connected with his Metamorphoses. With infinite difficulty, she had dared to admit the idea of flying with his Grace: but when the idea was once admitted; when she really had, once or twice, constantly dwelt on the idea of at length being free from her tyrant, and perhaps about to indulge in those beautiful affections for which she was formed, and of which she had been rifled; when, I say, all this occurred, and her hero diplomatized, and, in short, kept back—why, she had advanced one step, without knowing it, to running away with another man.

It was unlucky that De Whiskerburg stept in. An Englishman would not have done. She knew them well, and despised them all; but he was new (dangerous novelty), with a cast of feelings,

which, because they were strange, she believed to be unhackneyed, and he was impassioned. We need not go on.

So this star has dropped from out the heaven; so this precious pearl no longer gleams among the jewels of society, and there she breathes in a foreign land, among strange faces, and stranger customs: and when she thinks of what is past, laughs at some present emptiness, and tries to persuade her withering heart, that the mind is independent of country, and blood, and opinion. And her father's face no longer shines with its proud love, and her mother's voice no longer whispers to her with sweet anxiety. Clouded is the brow of her bold brother, and dimmed is the radiancy of her budding sister's bloom.

Poor creature! that is to say, wicked woman!—for we are not of those who set themselves against the verdict of society, or ever omit to expedite, by a gentle kick, a falling friend. And yet, when we just remember beauty is beauty, and grace is grace, and kindness is kindness, although the beautiful, the graceful, and the amiable, do get in a scrape, we don't know how it is, we confess it is a weakness, but under these circumstances, we do not feel quite inclined to sneer. But this is wrong. We should not pity or pardon those who have yielded to great temptation, or perchance great provocation. Besides, it is right that our sympathy should be kept for the injured.

To stand amid the cold ashes of your desolate hearth, with all your Penates shivered at your feet; to find no smiling face meet your return, no brow look gloomy when you leave your door; to eat and sleep alone; to be bored with grumbling servants and with weekly bills; to have your children asking after mamma; and no one to nurse your gout, or cure the influenza that rages in your household;—all this is doubtless hard to digest, and would *tell* in a novel, particularly if written by my friends Mr. Ward or Mr. Bulwer.

CHAPTER XII.

THE Duke had passed a stormy morning with his solicitor, who wished him to sell the Pen Bronnock property, which, being parliamentary, would command a price infinitely greater than might be expected from its relative income. The very idea of stripping his coronet of this brightest jewel, and thus sacrificing for wealth the ends of riches, greatly disordered him, and he more and more felt the want of a counsellor who could sympathise with his feelings, as well as arrange his fortunes. In this mood, he suddenly seized a pen, and wrote the following letter:—

"—— House, Feb. 5, 182—.

"MY DEAR MR. DACRE,

"I keenly feel that you are the last person to whom I should apply for the counsels or the consolation of friendship. I have long ago forfeited all claims to your regard, and your esteem I never possessed. Yet, if only because my career ought to end by my being an unsuccessful suppliant to the individual whom both virtue and nature pointed out to me as my best friend, and whose proffered and parental support I have so wantonly, however thoughtlessly, rejected, I do not regret that this is written. No feeling of false delicacy can prevent me from applying to one to whom I have long ago incurred incalculable obligations, and no feeling of false delicacy will, I hope, for a moment, prevent you from refusing the application of one who has acknowledged those obligations only by incalculable ingratitude.

"In a word, my affairs are, I fear, inextricably involved. I will not dwell upon the madness of my life; suffice that its consequences appall me. I have really endeavoured to examine into all details, and am prepared to meet the evil as becomes me; but, indeed, my head turns with the complicated interests which solicit my consideration; and I tremble lest, in the distraction of my mind, I may adopt measures which may baffle the very results I would attain. For myself, I am very ready to pay the penalty of my silly profligacy; and if exile, or any other personal infliction, can redeem the fortunes of the House that I have betrayed, I shall cheerfully submit to my destiny. My career has been productive of too little happiness to make me regret its termination.

"But I want advice: I want the counsel of one who can sympathise with my distracted feelings—who will look as much, or rather more, to the honour of my family than to the convenience of myself. I cannot obtain this from what are called men of

business, and, with a blush, I confess I have no friend. In this situation, my thoughts recur to one on whom, believe me, they have often dwelt; and although I have no right to appeal to your heart, for my father's sake you will perhaps pardon this address. Whatever you may resolve, my dearest sir, rest assured that you and your family will always command the liveliest gratitude of one who regrets he may not subscribe himself

"Your obliged and devoted friend,

"ST. JAMES."

"I beg that you will not answer this, if your determination be what I anticipate and what I deserve."

"Dacre Dacre, Esq., &c., &c., &c."

It was signed, sealed, and sent. He repented its transmission when it was gone. He almost resolved to send a courier to stop the post. He continued walking up and down his room for the rest of the day: he could not eat, or read, or talk. He was plunged in a nervous reverie. He passed the next day in the same state. Unable to leave his house, and unseen by visitors, he retired to his bed, feverish and dispirited. The morning came, and he woke from his hot and broken sleep at an early hour; yet he had not energy to rise. At last, the post arrived, and his letters were brought up to him. With a trembling hand and sinking breath he read these lines:—

"Castle Dacre, February 6, 182—.

"MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

"Not only for your father's sake, but your own, are my services ever at your command. I have long been sensible of your amiable disposition, and there are circumstances which will ever make me your debtor.

"The announcement of the embarrassed state of your affairs fills me with sorrow and anxiety, yet I will hope the best. Young men, unconsciously, exaggerate adversity as well as prosperity. If you are not an habitual gamester, and I hope you have not been even an occasional one, unbounded extravagance could scarcely, in two years, have permanently injured your resources. However, bring down with you all papers, and be careful to make no arrangement, even of the slightest nature, until we meet.

"We expect you hourly. May desires her kindest regards, and begs me to express the great pleasure which she will feel at again finding you our guest. It is unnecessary for me to repeat how very sincerely I am your friend,

"DACRE DACRE."

He read the letter three times, to be sure he did not mistake the delightful import. Then he rang the bell with a vivacity which had not characterised him for many a month.

"Luigi! prepare to leave town to-morrow morning for an indefinite period. I shall only take you. I must dress immediately, and order breakfast and my horses."

The Duke of St. James had communicated the state of affairs to Fitz-pompey, who was very shocked, offered his best services, and also asked him to dinner, to meet the Marquess of Marylebone. The young Duke had also announced to his relatives, and to some of his particular friends, that he intended to travel for some time, and he well knew that their charitable experience would understand the rest. They understood everything. The Marquess' party daily increased, and "The Universe" and the "New World" announced, that the young Duke was "done up."

There was one person to whom our hero would pay a farewell visit before he left London. This was Lady Caroline St. Maurice. He had called at Fitz-pompey House one or two mornings in the hope of finding her alone, and to-day he determined to be more successful. As he stopped his horse for the last time before his uncle's mansion, he could not help calling to mind the first visit which he had paid after his arrival. But the door opens,—he enters,—he is announced,—and finds Lady Caroline alone.

Ten minutes passed away, as if the morning ride or evening ball were again to bring them together. The young Duke was still gay, and still amusing. At last he said with a smile—

"Do you know, Caroline, this is a farewell visit, and to you?"

She did not speak, but bent her head, as if she were intent upon some work, and so seated herself that her countenance was almost hid.

"You have heard from my uncle," continued he, laughing; "and if you have not heard from him, you have heard from somebody else, of my little scrape. A fool and his money, you know, Caroline, and a short reign and a merry one. When we get prudent, we are wondrous fond of proverbs. My reign has certainly been brief enough: with regard to the merriment, that is not quite so certain. I have little to regret except your society, sweet coz!"

"Dear George, how can you talk so of such serious affairs! If you knew how unhappy, how miserable I am, when I hear the cold, callous world speak of such things with indifference, you would at least not imitate their heartlessness."

"Dear Caroline!" said he, seating himself at her side.

"I cannot help thinking," she continued, "that you have not sufficiently exerted yourself about these embarrassments. You are, of course, too harassed—too much annoyed—too little accustomed to the energy and the detail of business, to interfere with any effect; but surely, surely, a friend might. You will not speak to my father, and perhaps you have your reasons; but is there no one else? St. Maurice, I know, has no head. Ah! George, I often feel, that if your relations had been different people, your fate might have been different. We are the fault."

He kissed her hand.

"Among all your intimates," she continued, "is there no one fit to be your counsellor—no one worthy of your confidence?"

"None," said the Duke bitterly, "none—none. I have no friend among those intimates: there is not a man of them who cares to serve or is capable of serving me."

"You have well considered?" asked Lady Caroline.

"Well, dear, well. I know them all by rote—head and heart. Ah! my dear, dear Carry, if you were a man, what a nice little friend you would be!"

"You will always laugh, George. But I—I have no heart to laugh. This breaking up of your affairs, this exile, this losing you whom we all love—love so dearly, makes me quite miserable."

He kissed her hand again.

"I dare say," she continued, "you have thought me as heartless as the rest, because I never spoke. But I knew—that is, I feared—or, rather, hoped, that a great part of what I heard was false; and so I thought notice was unnecessary, and might be painful. Yet, heaven knows, there are few subjects that have been oftener in my thoughts, or cost me more anxiety. Are you sure you have no friend?"

"I have you, Caroline. I did not say I had no friends: I said, I had none among those intimates you talked of; that there was no man among them capable of the necessary interference, even if he were willing to undertake it. But I am not friendless—not quite forlorn, dear! My fate has given me a friend, that I but little deserve; one whom, if I had prized better, I should not perhaps have been obliged to put his friendship to so severe a trial. To-morrow, Caroline, I depart for Castle Dacre; there is my friend. Alas! how little have I deserved such a boon!"

"Dacre!" exclaimed Lady Caroline, "Mr. Dacre! Oh! you have made me so happy, George! Mr. Dacre is the very, very

person,—that is, the very best person you could possibly have applied to."

"Good bye, Caroline," said his Grace, rising.

She burst into tears.

Never, never had she looked so lovely: never, never had he loved her so entirely! Tears!—tears shed for him! Oh! what, what is grief, when a lovely woman remains to weep over our misfortunes! Could he be miserable, could his career, indeed, be unfortunate, when this was reserved for him? He was on the point of pledging his affection, but to leave her under such circumstances was impossible: to neglect Mr. Dacre was equally so. He determined to arrange his affairs with all possible promptitude, and then to hasten up, and entreat her to share his diminished fortunes. But he would not go without whispering hope, without leaving some soft thought to lighten her lonely hours. He caught her in his arms; he covered her sweet, small mouth with kisses, and whispered, in the midst of their pure embrace—

"Dearest Carry! I shall soon return, and we will yet be happy."

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

Miss Dacre, although she was prepared to greet the Duke of St. James with cordiality, did not anticipate with equal pleasure the arrival of the page and the jager. Infinite had been the disturbances they had occasioned during their first visit, and endless the complaints of the steward and the housekeeper. The men-servants were initiated in the mysteries of dominoes, and the maid-servants in the tactics of flirtation. Karlstein was the hero of the under-butlers, and even the trusty guardian of the cellar himself was too often on the point of obtaining the German's opinion of his master's German wines. Gaming, and drunkenness, and love, the most productive of all the teeming causes of human sorrow, had, in a week, sadly disordered the well-regulated household of Castle Dacre, and nothing but the impetuosity of our hero would have saved his host's establishment from utter perdition. Miss Dacre was, therefore, not less pleased than surprised, when the britzska of the Duke of St. James discharged, on a fine afternoon, its noble master, attended only by the faithful Luigi, at the terrace of the Castle.

A few country cousins, fresh from Cumberland, who knew nothing of the Duke of St. James, except from a stray number of "The Universe," which occasionally stole down to corrupt the pure waters of their lakes, were the only guests. Mr. Dacre grasped our hero's hand with a warmth and expression which were unusual with him, but which conveyed, better than words, the depth of his friendship; and his daughter, who looked more beautiful than ever, advanced with a beaming face and joyous tone, which quite reconciled the Duke of St. James to be a ruined man.

The presence of strangers limited their conversation to subjects of general interest. At dinner, the Duke took care to be most agreeable: he talked in a very unaffected manner, and particularly to the cousins, who were all delighted with him, and found him "quite a different person to what they had fancied." The evening passed over, and even lightly, without the aid of Ecarté, romances, or gallops. Mr. Dacre chatted with old Mr. Monting-

ford, and old Mrs. Montingford sat still admiring her "girls," who stood still admiring May Dacre singing or talking, and occasionally reconciled us to their occasional silence, by a frequent and extremely hearty laugh—that Cumberland laugh, which never outlives a single season in London.

And the Duke of St. James—what did he do? It must be confessed, that in some points he greatly resembled the Misses Montingford, for he was both silent and admiring—but he never laughed. Yet he was not dull, and was careful not to show that he had cares, which is vulgar. If a man be gloomy, let him keep to himself. No one has a right to go croaking about society, or, what is worse, looking as if he stifled grief. These fellows should be put in the pound. We like a good broken heart or so, now and then; but then one should retire to the Sierra Morena mountains, and live upon locusts and wild honey, not "dine out" with our cracked cores, and while we are meditating suicide, the Gazette, or the Chiltern Hundreds, damn a vintage, or eulogize an entrée.

And as for cares—what are cares when a man is in love? Once more they had met,—once more he gazed upon that sunny and sparkling face,—once more he listened to that sweet and thrilling voice, which sounded like a bird-like burst of music upon a summer morning. She moved, and each attitude was fascination. She was still; and he regretted that she moved. Now, her neck, now her hair, now her round arm, now her tapering waist, ravished his attention: now he is in ecstasies with her twinkling foot; now he is dazzled with her glancing hand.

Once more he was a Dacre! How different was this meeting to their first! Then, she was cold, almost cutting; then she was disregardful, almost contemptuous; but then he had hoped,—ah! madman, he had more than hoped. Now she was warm, almost affectionate; now she listened to him with readiness, ay! almost courted his conversation. And now he could only despair. As he stood alone before the fire, chewing this bitter cud, she approached him.

"How good you were to come directly!" she said with a smile, which melted his heart. "I fear, however, you will not find us so merry as before. But you can make anything amusing. Come then, and sing to these damsels. Do you know they are half afraid of you? and I cannot persuade them that a terrible magician has not assumed, for the nonce, the air and appearance of a young gentleman of distinction."

He smiled, but could not speak. Repartee sadly deserts the lover; yet smiles, under those circumstances, are very eloquent; and the eye, after all, speaks much more to the purpose, than the

tongue. Forgetting everything, except the person who addressed him, he offered her his hand, and advanced to the group which surrounded the piano.

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning was passed by the Duke of St. James in giving Mr. Dacre his report of the state of his affairs. His banker's accounts, his architect's estimates, his solicitor's statements, were all brought forward and discussed. A ride generally with Miss Dacre and one of her young friends, dinner, and a short evening, and eleven o'clock, sent them all to repose. Thus glided on a fortnight. The mornings continued to be passed in business. Affairs were more complicated than his Grace had imagined, who had no idea of detail. He gave all the information that he could, and made his friend master of his particular feelings. For the rest, Mr. Dacre was soon involved in much correspondence; and although the young Duke could no longer assist him, he recommended, and earnestly begged, that he would remain at Dacre; for he could perceive, better than his Grace, that our hero was labouring under a great deal of excitement, and that his health was impaired. A regular course of life was therefore as necessary for his constitution, as it was desirable for all other reasons.

Behold, then, our hero domesticated at Dacre—rising at nine, joining a family breakfast, taking a quiet ride, or moderate stroll, sometimes looking into a book—but he was no great reader; sometimes fortunate enough in achieving a stray game at billiards, usually with a Miss Montingford, and retiring to rest about the time that in London his most active existence generally began. Was he dull? was he wearied? He was never lighter-hearted, or more contented, in his life. Happy he could not allow himself to be styled, because the very cause which breathed this calm over his existence seemed to portend a storm, which could not be avoided. It was the thought, the presence, the smile, the voice of May Dacre, that imparted this new interest to existence; that being who never could be his. He shuddered to think that all this must end; but although he never indulged again in the great hope, his sanguine temper allowed him to thrust away the future, and to participate in all the joys of the flowing hour.

At the end of February, the Montingfords departed, and now the Duke was the only guest at Dacre; nor did he hear that any

others were expected. He was alone with her again; often was he alone with her, and never without a strange feeling coming over his frame, which made him tremble. Mr. Dacre, a man of active habits, always found occupation in his public duties and in the various interests of a large estate, and usually requested, or rather required, the Duke of St. James to be his companion. He was desirous that the Duke should not be alone, and ponder too much over the past; nor did he conceal his wishes from his daughter, who on all occasions, as the Duke observed with gratification, seconded the benevolent intentions of her parent. Nor did our hero indeed wish to be alone, or to ponder over the past. He was quite contented with the present; but he did not want to ride with papa, and took every opportunity to shirk;—all which Mr. Dacre set down to the indolence of exhaustion, and the inertness of a mind without an object.

"I am going to ride over to Doncaster, George," said Mr. Dacre one morning at breakfast. "I think that you had better order your horse too. A good ride will rouse you, and you should show yourself there."

"Oh! very well, Sir; but,—but I think that——"

"But what?" asked Mr. Dacre, smiling.

The Duke looked to Miss Dacre, who seemed to take pity on his idleness.

"You make him ride too much, papa. Leave him at home with me. I have a long round to-day, and want an escort. I will take him instead of my friend Tom Carter. You must carry a basket though," said she, turning to the Duke, "and run for the doctor if he be wanted, and, in short, do any odd message that turns up."

So Mr. Dacre departed alone, and shortly after his daughter and the Duke of St. James set out on their morning ramble. Many were the cottages at which they called—many the old dames after whose rheumatisms, and many the young damsels after whose fortunes, they inquired. Old Dame Rawdon was worse or better; worse last night, but better this morning. She was always better when Miss called. Miss's face always did her good. And Fanny was very comfortable at Squire Wentworth's, and the housekeeper was very kind to her, thanks to Miss saying a word to the great Lady. And old John Selby was quite about again. Miss's stuff had done him a world of good, to say nothing of Mr. Dacre's generous old wine.

"And is this your second son, Dame Rishworth?"

"No; that bees our fourth," said the old woman, maternally arranging the urchin's thin, white, flat, straight, unmanageable hair. "We are thinking what to do with him, Miss. He wants to go out to sarvice. Since Jem Eustace got on so, I don't know what

the matter is with the lads; but I think we shall have none of them in the fields soon. He can clean knives and shoes very well, Miss. Mr. Bradford, at the Castle, was saying t'other day, that perhaps he might want a young hand. You haven't heard anything, I suppose, Miss?"

"And what is your name, Sir?" asked Miss Dacre.

"Bobby Rishworth, Miss!"

"Well, Bobby, I must consult Mr. Bradford."

"We be in great trouble, Miss," said the next cottager. "We be in great trouble, Tom, poor Tom, was out last night, and the keepers will give him up. The good man has done all he can,—we have all done all we can, Miss, and you see how it ends. He is the first of the family that ever went out. I hope that will be considered, Miss. Seventy years, our fathers before us, have we been on the 'state, and nothing ever sworn agin us. I hope that will be considered, Miss. I am sure if Tom had been an underkeeper, as Mr. Roberts once talked of, this would have never happened. I hope that will be considered, Miss. We are in great trouble surely. Tom, you see, was our first, Miss."

"I never interfere about poaching, you know, Mrs. Jones. Mr. Dacre is the best judge of such matters. But you can go to him, and say that I sent you. I am afraid, however, that he has heard of Tom before."

"Only that night at Milwood, Miss, and then, you see, he had been drinking with Squire Ridge's people. I hope that will be considered, Miss."

"Well, well, go up to the Castle."

"Pray, be seated, Miss," said a very neat-looking mistress of a very neat little farmhouse. "Pray, be seated, Sir. Let me dust it first. Dust will get everywhere, do what we can. And how's Pa, Miss? He has not given me a look-in for many a day,—not since he was a-hunting: bless me, if it ayn't a fortnight. This day fortnight he tasted our ale, sure enough. Will you take a glass, Sir?"

"You are very good. No, I thank you; not to-day."

"Yes, give him a glass, Nurse. He is very unwell, and it will do him good."

She brought the sparkling amber fluid, and the Duke did justice by his draught.

"I shall have fine honey for you, Miss, this year," said the old Nurse. "Are you fond of honey, Sir? Our honey is well-known about. I don't know how it is, but we do always contrive to manage the bees. How fond some people are of honey, good Lord! Now, when you were a little girl (I knew this young lady, Sir, before you did), you always used to be fond of honey. I

remember one day—let me see—it must be—ay! truly, that it is—eighteen years ago next Martinmas. I was a-going down the nursery stairs, just to my poor mistress's room, and I had you in my arms (for I knew this young lady, Sir, before you did)—Well! I was a-going down the stairs, as I just said, to my poor dear mistress's room, with you, who was then a little-un indeed (bless your smiling face! you cost me many a weary hour when you were weaned, Miss. That you did! Some thought you would never get through it; but I always said, while there is life, there is hope; and so, you see, I were right)—but, as I was saying, I was a-going down the stairs to my poor dear mistress, and I had a gallipot in my hand, a covered gallipot, with some leeches. And just as I had got to the bottom of the stairs, and was a-going into my poor dear mistress's room, said you (I never shall forget it), said you, 'Honey, honey, Nurse.' She thought it were honey, Sir. So, you see, she were always very fond of honey (for I knew this young lady long before you did, Sir)."

"Are you quite sure of that, Nurse?" said Miss Dacre; "I think this is an older friend than you imagine. You remember the little Duke; do not you? This is the little Duke. Do you think he has grown?"

"Now! bless my life! is it so indeed? Well, be sure, he has grown. I always thought he would turn out well, Miss, though Dr. Pretyman were always a-preaching, and talking his prophecy-cations. I always thought he would turn out well at last. Bless me! how he has grown, indeed! Perhaps he grows too fast, and that makes him weak. Nothing better than a glass of ale for weak people. I remember when Dr. Pretyman ordered it for my poor dear mistress. 'Give her ale,' said the Doctor, 'as strong as it can be brewed;' and sure enough, my poor dear master had it brewed! Have you done growing, Sir? You was ever a troublesome child. Often and often have I called George, George, Georgy, Georgy Porgy, and he never would come near me, though he heard all the time as plainly as he does now. Bless me! he has grown indeed!"

"But I have turned out well at last, Nurse, eh?" asked the Duke.

"Ay! sure enough; I always said so. Often and often have I said, he will turn out well at last. You be going, Miss? I thank you for looking in. My duty to my master. I was thinking of bringing up one of those cheeses he likes so."

"Ay! do, Nurse. He can eat no cheese but yours."

As they wandered home, they talked of Lady Caroline, to whom the Duke mentioned that he must write. He had once intended distinctly to have explained his feelings to her in a letter from

Dacre; but each day he postponed the close of his destiny, although without hope. He lingered, and he lingered round May Dacre, as a bird flutters round the fruit which is already grasped by a boy. Circumstances, which we shall relate, had already occurred, which confirmed the suspicion he had long entertained, that Arundel Dacre was his favoured rival. Impressed with the folly of again encouraging hope, yet unable to harden his heart against her continual fascination, the softness of his manner indicated his passion, and his calm and somewhat languid carriage also told her it was hopeless. Perhaps, after all, there is no demeanour more calculated to melt obdurate woman. The gratification he received from her society was evident, yet he never indulged in that gallantry of which he was once so proud. When she approached him, a mild smile lit up his pensive countenance; he adopted her suggestions, but made none; he listened to her remarks with interest, but no longer bandied repartee. Delicately he impressed her with the absolute power which she might exercise over his mind.

"I write myself to Caroline to-morrow," said Miss Dacre.

"Ah! Then I need not write. I talked of going up sooner. Have the kindness to explain why I do not:—peremptory orders from Mr. Dacre—fresh air, and——"

"Arithmetic: I understand you get on most admirably."

"My follies," said the Duke with a serious air, "have at least been productive of one good end—they have amused you."

"Nay! I have done too many foolish things myself any more to laugh at my neighbours. As for yourself, you have only committed those which were inseparable from your situation; and few, like the Duke of St. James, would so soon have opened their eyes to the truth of their conduct."

"A compliment from you repays me for all."

"Self-approbation does, which is much better than compliments from any one. See! there is Papa—and Arundel too: let us run up!"

CHAPTER III.

THE Duke of St. James had, on his arrival at Dacre, soon observed, that a very constant correspondence was maintained between Miss Dacre and her cousin. There was no attempt to conceal the fact from any of the guests, and, as that young gentleman was now engaged in an affair interesting to all his friends, every letter generally contained some paragraph almost as interesting to the Montingfords as to herself, which was accordingly read aloud. Mr. Arundel Dacre was candidate for the vacant representation of a town in a distant county. He had been disappointed in his views on the borough, about which he had returned to England, but had been nevertheless persuaded by his cousin to remain in his native country. During this period, he had been a great deal at Castle Dacre, and had become much more intimate and unreserved with his uncle, who observed with the greatest satisfaction this change in his character, and lost no opportunity of deserving and increasing the confidence for which he had so long unavailingly yearned, and which was now so unexpectedly proffered.

The borough for which Arundel Dacre was about to stand was in Sussex, a county in which his family had no property, and very slight connections. Yet at the place, the Catholic interest was strong, and on that, and the usual Whig influence, he ventured. His desire to be a member of the Legislature, at all and from early times extreme, was now greatly heightened by the prospect of being present at the impending Catholic debate. After an absence of three weeks, he had hurried to Yorkshire for four-and-twenty hours, to give a report of the state of his canvass, and the probability of his success. In that success all were greatly interested, but none more so than Miss Dacre, whose thoughts indeed seemed to dwell on no other subject, and who expressed herself with a warmth which betrayed her secret feelings. Had the place only been in Yorkshire, she was sure he must have succeeded. She was the best canvasser in the world, and everybody agreed that Harry Greystock owed his election merely to her insinuating tongue and unrivalled powers of scampering, by which she had completely baffled the tactics of Lady Amarantha Germain, who thought that a canvass was only a long morning call, and might be achieved in a cashmere and a britzska.

The young Duke, who had seen very little of his second since the eventful day, greeted him with warmth, and was welcomed with a frankness which he had never before experienced from his

friend. Excited by rapid travel and his present course of life, and not damped by the unexpected presence of any strangers, Arundel Dacre seemed quite a changed man, and talked immensely.

"Come, May, I must have a kiss! I have been kissing as pretty girls as you. There now! You all said I never should be a popular candidate. I get regularly huzzaed every day—so they have been obliged to hire a band of butchers' boys to pelt me. Whereupon I compare myself to Cæsar set upon in the Senate House, and get immense cheering in 'The County Chronicle,' which I have bribed. If you knew the butts of wine, the Heidelberg tuns of ale, that I have drunk during the last fortnight, you would stare indeed. As much as the Lake: but then I have to talk so much, that the ardour of my eloquence, like the hot flannels of the Humane Society, save me from the injurious effects of all this liquid."

"But will you get in,—but will you get in?" exclaimed his cousin.

"'Tis not in mortals to command success; but——"

"Pooh! pooh! you must command it!"

"Well, then, I have an excellent chance; and the only thing against me is, that my committee are quite sure. But really I think, that if the Protestant overseers, whom, by-the-bye, May, I cannot persuade that I am a heretic (it is very hard that a man is not believed when he says he shall be damned), if they do not empty the workhouse, we shall do. But let us go in, for I have travelled all night, and must be off to-morrow morning."

They entered the house, and the Duke quitted the family group. About an hour afterwards, he sauntered to the music-room. As he opened the door, his eyes lighted upon May Dacre and her cousin. They were standing before the fire, with their backs to the door. His arm was wound carelessly round her waist, and with his other hand he supported, with her, a miniature at which she was looking. The Duke could not catch her countenance, which was completely hid; but her companion was not gazing on the picture: his head, a little turned, indicated that there was a living countenance more interesting to him than all the skill of the most cunning artist. Part of his cheek was alone perceptible, and that was burning red.

All this was the work of a moment. The Duke stared, turned pale, closed the door without a sound, and retired unperceived. When he was sure that he could no longer be observed, he gasped for breath, a cold dew covered his frame, his joints loosened, and his sinking heart gave him that sickening sensation when life appears utterly worthless, and ourselves utterly contemptible. Yet

what had he witnessed? A confirmation of what he had never doubted. What was this woman to him? Alas! how supreme was the power with which she ruled his spirit! And this Dacre, this Arundel Dacre,—how he hated him! Oh! that they were hand to hand, and sword to sword, in some fair field, and there decide it! He must conquer; he felt that. Already his weapon pierced that craven heart, and ripped open that breast which was to be the pillow of ——. Hell! hell! He rushed to his room, and began a letter to Caroline St. Maurice; but he could not write; and after scribbling over a quire of paper, he threw the sheets to the flames, and determined to ride up to town to-morrow.

The dinner bell sounded. Could he meet them? Ay! meet them! Defy them! Insult them! He descended to the dining-room. He heard her musical and liquid voice; the scowl upon his brow melted away; but, gloomy and silent, he took his seat, and gloomy and silent he remained. Little he spoke, and that little was scarcely courteous. But Arundel had enough to say. He was the hero of the party. Well he might be. Story after story of old maids and young widows, sturdy butchers and corrupt coal-merchants, sparkled away; but a faint smile was all the tribute of the Duke, and a tribute that was seldom paid.

"You are not well!" said Miss Dacre to him, in a low voice.

"I believe I am," answered he shortly.

"You do not seem quite so," she replied, with an air of surprise.

"I believe I have got a headache," he retorted with very little more cordiality. She did not again speak, but she was evidently annoyed.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE certainly is a dark delight in being miserable—a sort of strange satisfaction in being savage, which is uncommonly fascinating. One of the greatest pests of philosophy is, that one can no longer be sullen, and most sincerely do I regret it. To brood over misery—to flatter yourself that there is not a single being who cares for your existence, and not a single circumstance to make that existence desirable: there is wild witchery in it, which we doubt whether opium can reach, and are sure that wine cannot.

And the Duke! He soon left the uncle and nephew to their miserable speculations about the state of the poll, and took his sullen way, with the air of Ajax, to the terrace. Here he stalked along in a fierce reverie; asked why he had been born; why he did not die; why he should live, and so on. His wounded pride, which had borne so much, fairly got the mastery, and revenged itself for all insults on Love, whom it ejected most scurvily. He blushed to think how he had humiliated himself before her. She was the cause of that humiliation, and of every disagreeable sensation that he was experiencing; he began therefore to imprecate vengeance, walked himself into a fair, cold-hearted, malicious passion, and avowed most distinctly that he hated her. As for him, most ardently he hoped that, some day or other, they might again meet at six o'clock in the morning in Kensington Gardens, but in a different relation to each other.

It was dark when he entered the Castle. He was about ascending to his own room, when he determined not to be cowed, and resolved to show himself the regardless witness of their mutual loves: so he repaired to the drawing-room. At one end of this very spacious apartment, Mr. Dacre and Arundel were walking in deep converse; at the other sat Miss Dacre at a table reading. The Duke seized a chair without looking at her, dragged it along to the fire-place, and there seating himself, with his arms folded, his feet on the fender, and his chair tilting, he appeared to be lost in the abstracting contemplation of the consuming fuel.

Some minutes had passed, when a slight sound, like a fluttering bird, made him look up:—Miss Dacre was standing at his side.

"Is your head better?" she asked him, in a soft voice.

"Thank you, it is quite well," he replied, in a sullen one.

There was a moment's pause, and then she again spoke.

"I am sure you are not well."

"Perfectly, thank you."

"Something has happened, then," she said, rather imploringly.

"What should have happened?" he rejoined, very pettishly.

"You are very strange, very unlike what you always are."

"What I always am, is of no consequence to myself, or to any one else; and as for what I am now, I cannot always command my feelings, though I shall take care that they are not again observed."

"I have offended you?"

"Then you have shown your discretion, for you should always offend the forlorn."

"I did not think before, that you were bitter.'

"That has made me bitter, which has made all others so."

"What?"

"Disappointment."

Another pause, yet she did not go.

"I will not quarrel, and so you need not try. You are consigned to my care, and I am to amuse you. What shall we do?"

"Do what you like, Miss Dacre; but spare, oh! spare me, your pity!"

"My Lord! you do indeed surprise me. Pity! I was not thinking of pity! But you are indeed serious, and I leave you."

He turned;—he seized her hand.

"Nay! do not go. Forgive me," he said,—"forgive me, for I am most miserable."

"Why, why are you?"

"Oh! do not ask, you agonize me."

"Shall I sing? shall I charm the evil spirit?"

"Anything."

She tripped to the piano, and an air, bursting like the Spring, and gay as a village feast, filled the room with its delight. He listened, and each instant the chilly weight loosened from his heart. Her balmy voice now came upon his ear, breathing joy and cheerfulness, content and love. Could love be the savage passion which lately subjugated his soul? He rose from his seat, he walked about the room; each minute, his heart was lighter, his brow more smooth. A thousand thoughts, beautiful and quivering like the twilight, glanced o'er his mind, in indistinct but exquisite tumult, and hope, like the voice of an angel in a storm, was heard above all. He lifted a chair gently from the ground, and stealing to the enchantress, seated himself at her side. So softly he reached her, that for a moment he was unperceived. She turned her head, and her eyes met his. Even the ineffable incident was forgotten, as he marked the strange gush of lovely light, that seemed to say ——what to think of was, after all, madness.

CHAPTER V.

THE storm was past. He vowed that a dark thought should not again cross his mind. It was fated that she should not be his; but it was some miserable satisfaction, that he was only rejected in favour of an attachment which had grown with her years, and had strengthened with her stature, and in deference to an engagement hallowed by time as well as by affection. It was deadly indeed to remember, that Fate seemed to have destined him for that happy position, and that his folly had rejected the proffered draught of bliss. He blasphemed against the Fitz-pompeys. However, he did not leave Dacre at the same time as Arundel, but lingered on. His affairs were far from being arranged. The Irish business gave great trouble, and he determined therefore to remain.

It was ridiculous to talk of feeding a passion which was not susceptible of increase. Her society was Heaven; and he resolved to enjoy it, although he was to be expelled. As for his loss of fortune, it gave him not a moment's care. Without her, he felt he could not live in England, and, even ruined, he would be a match for an Italian prince.

So he continued her companion, each day rising with purer feelings and a more benevolent heart; each day more convinced of the falseness of his past existence, and of the possibility of happiness to a well-regulated mind; each day more conscious that duty is nothing more than self-knowledge, and the performance of it consequently the development of feelings which are the only true source of self-gratification. He mourned over the opportunities which he had forfeited of conducing to the happiness of others and himself. Sometimes he had resolved to remain in England and devote himself to his tenantry; but passion blinded him, and he felt that he had erred too far, ever to regain the right road.

The election for which Arundel Dacre was a candidate came on. Each day the state of the poll arrived. It was nearly equal to the last. Their agitation was terrible, but forgotten in the deep mortification which they experienced at the announcement of his defeat. He talked to the public very boldly of petitioning, and his certainty of ultimate success; but he let them know privately, that he had no intention of the first, and no chance of the second. Even Mr. Dacre could not conceal his deep disappointment; but May was quite in despair. Even if her father could find means of securing him a seat another time, the present great opportunity was lost.

"Surely we can make some arrangement for next session," said the Duke, whispering hope to her.

"Oh! no, no, no; so much depended upon this. It is not merely his taking a part in the debate, but—but—Arundel is so odd, and everything was staked upon this. I cannot tell you what depended upon it. He will leave England directly."

She did not attempt to conceal her agitation. The Duke rose, and paced the room in a state scarcely less moved. A thought had suddenly flashed upon him. Their marriage doubtless depended upon this success. He knew something of Arundel Dacre, and had heard more. He was convinced of the truth of his suspicion. Either the nephew would not claim her hand, until he had carved out his own fortunes, or perhaps the uncle made his distinction the condition of his consent. Yet this was odd. It was all odd. A thousand things had occurred which equally puzzled him. Yet he had seen enough to weigh against a thousand thoughts.

CHAPTER VI.

ANOTHER fortnight glided away, and he was still at the Castle, still the constant and almost sole companion of May Dacre.

It is breakfast; the servant is delivering the letter-bag to Mr. Dacre. Interesting moment! when you extend your hand for the billet of a mistress, and receive your tailor's bill! How provokingly slow are most domestic chieftains in this anxious operation! They turn the letters over and over, and upside and down; arrange, confuse, mistake, assort; pretend, like Champollion, to decipher illegible franks, and deliver with a slight remark, which is intended as a friendly admonition, the documents of the unlucky wight who encourages unprivileged correspondents.

A letter was delivered to Miss Dacre. She started, exclaimed, blushed, and tore it open.

"Only you, only you," she said, extending her hand to the young Duke, "only you were capable of this!"

It was a letter from Arundel Dacre, not only written but franked by him.

It explained everything that the Duke of St. James might have told them before; but he preferred hearing all himself, from the delighted and delightful lips of Miss Dacre, who read to her father her cousin's letter.

The Duke of St. James had returned him for one of his Cornish

boroughs. It appeared that Lord St. Maurice was the previous member, who had accepted the Chiltern Hundreds in his favour.

"You were determined to surprise, as well as delight us," said Mr. Dacre.

"I am no admirer of mysteries," said the Duke; "but the fact is, in the present case, it was not in my power to give you any positive information, and I had no desire to provide you, after your late disappointment, with new sources of anxiety. The only person I could take the liberty with, at so short a notice, was St. Maurice. He, you know, is a liberal; but he cannot forget that he is the son of a Tory, and has no very great ambition to take any active part in affairs at present. I anticipated less difficulty with him than with his father. St. Maurice can command me again when it suits him; but, I confess to you, I have been surprised at my uncle's kindness in this affair. I really have not done justice to his character before, and regret it. He has behaved in the most kind-hearted and the most liberal manner, and put me under obligations which I never shall forget. He seems as desirous of serving my friend as myself; and I assure you, Sir, it would give you pleasure to know in what terms of respect he speaks of your family, and particularly of Arundel."

"Arundel says he shall take his seat the morning of the debate. How very near! how admirably managed! Oh! I never shall recover my surprise and delight! How good you are!"

"He takes his seat, then, to-morrow," said Mr. Dacre, in a musing tone. "My letters give a rather nervous account of affairs. We are to win it, they hope, but by two only. As for the Lords, the majority against us will, it is said, be somewhat smaller than usual. We shall never triumph, George, till May is M.P. for the county. Cannot you return her for Pen Bronnock too?"

They talked, as you may suppose, of nothing else. At last, Mr. Dacre remembered an appointment with his bailiff, and proposed to the Duke to join him, who acceded.

"And I to be left alone this morning, then!" said Miss Dacre. "I am sure, as they say of children, I can set to nothing."

"Come and ride with us, then!"

"An excellent idea! Let us canter over to Hauteville! I am just in the humour for a gallop up the avenue, and feel half emancipated already with a Dacre in the House! Oh! to-morrow, how nervous I shall be!"

"I will dispatch Barrington, then," said Mr. Dacre, "and join you in ten minutes."

"How good you are!" said Miss Dacre to the Duke. "How can we thank you enough! What can we do for you!"

"You have thanked me enough! What have I done after all? My opportunity to serve my friends is brief. Is it wonderful that I seize the opportunity?"

"Brief! brief! Why do you always say so? Why do you talk so of leaving us?"

"My visit to you has been already too long. It must soon end, and I remain not in England when it ceases."

"Come and live at Hauteville, and be near us?"

He faintly smiled as he said, "No, no; my doom is fixed. Hauteville is the last place that I should choose for my residence, even if I remained in England. But I hear the horses."

The important night at length arrived, or rather the important messenger, who brought down, express, a report of its proceedings to Castle Dacre.

Nothing is more singular than the various success of men in the House of Commons. Fellows who have been the oracles of coteries from their birth, who have gone through the regular process of gold medals, senior wranglerships, and double firsts, who have nightly sat down amid tumultuous cheering in debating societies, and can harangue with unruffled forehead and unfaltering voice, from one end of a dinner-table to the other, who, on all occasions, have something to say, and can speak with fluency on what they know nothing about—no sooner rise in the House, than their spells desert them. All their effrontery vanishes. Common-place ideas are rendered even more uninteresting by monotonous delivery; and keenly alive as even boobies are in those sacred walls to the ridiculous, no one appears more thoroughly aware of his unexpected and astounding deficiencies than the orator himself. He regains his seat, hot and hard, sultry and stiff, with a burning cheek and an icy hand, repressing his breath lest it should give evidence of an existence of which he is ashamed, and clenching his fist, that the pressure may secretly convince him that he has not as completely annihilated his stupid body as his false reputation.

On the other hand, persons, whom the women have long deplored, and the men long pitied, as having "no manner," who blush when you speak to them, and blunder when they speak to you, suddenly jump up in the House with a self-confidence, which is only equalled by their consummate ability. And so it was with Arundel Dacre. He rose the first night that he took his seat, a great disadvantage, of which no one was more sensible than himself, and for an hour and a half he addressed the fullest House that had ever been assembled, with the self-possession of an habitual debater. His clenching argument, and his luminous detail, might have been expected from one who had the reputation of having

been a student. What was more surprising was, the withering sarcasm that blasted like the Simoom, the brilliant sallies of wit that flashed like a sabre, the gushing eddies of humour that drowned all opposition and overwhelmed those ponderous and unwieldy arguments which the producers announced as rocks, but which he proved to be porpoises. Never was there such a triumphant début; and a peroration of genuine eloquence, because of genuine feeling, concluded amid the long and renewed cheers of all parties.

The truth is, Eloquence is the child of Knowledge. When a mind is full, like a wholesome river, it is also clear. Confusion and obscurity are much oftener the results of ignorance than of inefficiency. Few are the men who cannot express their meaning, when the occasion demands the energy; as the lowest will defend their lives with acuteness, and sometimes even with eloquence. They are masters of their subject. Knowledge must be gained by ourselves. Mankind may supply us with facts; but the results, even if they agree with previous ones, must be the work of our own mind. To make others feel, we must feel ourselves; and to feel ourselves, we must be natural. This we can never be, when we are vomiting forth the dogmas of the schools. Knowledge is not a mere collection of words; and it is a delusion to suppose that thought can be obtained by the aid of any other intellect than our own. What is repetition, by a curious mystery ceases to be truth, even if it were truth when it was first heard; as the shadow in a mirror, though it move and mimic all the actions of vitality, is not life. When a man is not speaking, or writing, from his own mind, he is as insipid company as a looking-glass.

Before a man can address a popular assembly with command, he must know something of mankind; and he can know nothing of mankind without knowing something of himself. Self-knowledge is the property of that man whose passions have their play, but who ponders over their results. Such a man sympathises by inspiration with his kind. He has a key to every heart. He can divine, in the flash of a single thought, all that they require, all that they wish. Such a man speaks to their very core. All feel that a master-hand tears off the veil of cant, with which, from necessity, they have enveloped their souls; for cant is nothing more than the sophistry which results from attempting to account for what is unintelligible, or to defend what is improper.

Perhaps, although we use the term, we never have had oratory in England. There is an essential difference between oratory and debating. Oratory seems an accomplishment confined to the ancients, unless the French preachers may put in their claim, and some of the Irish lawyers. Mr. Sheil's speech in Kent was a fine

oration; and the boobies who taunted him for having got it by rote, were not aware that in doing so he only wisely followed the example of Pericles, Demosthenes, Lysias, Isocrates, Hortensius, Cicero, Cæsar, and every great orator of antiquity. Oratory is essentially the accomplishment of antiquity: it was their most efficient mode of communicating thought; it was their substitute for printing.

I like a good debate; and, when a stripling, used sometimes to be stifled in the Gallery, or enjoy the easier privileges of a member's son. I like, I say, a good debate, and have no objection to a due mixture of bores, which are a relief. I remember none of the giants of former days; but I have heard Canning. He was a consummate rhetorician; but there seemed to me a dash of commonplace in all that he said, and frequent indications of the absence of an original mind. To the last, he never got clear of "Good God, Sir!" and all the other hackneyed ejaculations of his youthful debating clubs. The most commanding speaker that I ever listened to is, I think, Sir Francis Burdett. I never heard him in the House;—but at an Election. He was full of music, grace, and dignity, even amid all the vulgar tumult; and, unlike all mob orators, raised the taste of the populace to him, instead of lowering his own to theirs. His colleague, Mr. Hobhouse, seemed to me ill qualified for a demagogue, though he spoke with power. He is rather too elaborate, and a little heavy, but fluent, and never weak. His thoughtful and highly-cultivated mind maintains him under all circumstances; and his breeding never deserts him. Sound sense comes recommended from his lips by the language of a scholar and the urbanity of a gentleman.

Mr. Brougham, at present, reigns paramount in the House of Commons. I think the lawyer has spoiled the statesman. He is said to have very great powers of sarcasm. From what I have observed there, I should think very little ones would be quite sufficient. Many a sneer withers in those walls, which would scarcely, I think, blight a currant-bush out of them; and I have seen the House convulsed with raillery which, in other society, would infallibly settle the rallier to be a bore beyond all tolerance. Even an idiot can raise a smile. They are so good-natured, or find it so dull. Mr. Canning's badinage was the most successful, though I confess I have listened to few things more calculated to make a man gloomy. But the House always ran riot, taking everything for granted, and cracked their universal sides before he opened his mouth. The fault of Mr. Brougham is, that he holds no intellect at present in great dread, and, consequently, allows himself on all occasions to run wild. Few men hazard more unphilosophical observations; but he is safe, because there is no one to notice them.

On all great occasions, Mr. Brougham has come up to the mark, —an infallible test of a man of genius.

I hear that Mr. Macaulay is to be returned. If he speaks half as well as he writes, the House will be in fashion again. I fear that he is one of those who, like the individual whom he has most studied, will "give up to party what was meant for mankind."

At any rate, he must get rid of his rabidity. He writes now on all subjects, as if he certainly intended to be a renegade, and was determined to make the contrast complete.

Mr. Peel is the model of a minister, and improves as a speaker; though, like most of the rest, he is fluent without the least style. He should not get so often in a passion either, or, if he do, should not get out of one so easily. His sweet apologies are cloying. His candour——he will do well to get rid of that. He can make a present of it to Mr. Huskisson, who is a memorable instance of the value of knowledge, which maintains a man under all circumstances and all disadvantages, and will.

In the Lords, I admire the Duke. The readiness with which he has adopted the air of a debater, shows the man of genius. There is a gruff, husky sort of a downright Montaignish naïveté about him, which is quaint, unusual, and tells. You plainly perceive that he is determined to be a civilian; and he is as offended if you drop a hint that he occasionally wears an uniform, as a servant on a holiday if you mention the word *livery*.

Lord Grey speaks with feeling and is better to hear than to read, though ever strong and impressive. Lord Holland's speeches are like a *refaccimento* of all the suppressed passages in Clarendon, and the notes in the new edition of Bishop Burnet's Memoirs: but taste throws a delicate hue over the curious medley, and the candour of a philosophic mind shows, that in the library of Holland House he can sometimes cease to be a partisan.

One thing is clear,—that a man may speak very well in the House of Commons, and fail very completely in the House of Lords. There are two distinct styles requisite: I intend, in the course of my career, if I have time, to give a specimen of both In the Lower House, Don Juan may perhaps be our model; in the Upper House, Paradise Lost.

CHAPTER VII.

NOTHING was talked of in Yorkshire but Mr. Arundel Dacre's speech. All the world flocked to Castle Dacre, to compliment and to congratulate; and an universal hope was expressed that he might come in for the county, if indeed the success of his eloquence did not enable his uncle to pre-occupy that honour. Even the calm Mr. Dacre shared the general elation, and told the Duke of St. James regularly every day, that it was all owing to him. May Dacre was enthusiastic; but her gratitude to him was synonymous with her love for Arundel, and valued accordingly. The Duke, however, felt that he had acted at once magnanimously, generously, and wisely. The consciousness of a noble action is itself ennobling. His spirit expanded with the exciting effects which his conduct had produced; and he felt consolation under all his misery, from the conviction that he had now claims to be remembered, and perhaps regarded, when he was no more among them.

The Bill went swimmingly through the Commons, the majority of two gradually swelling into eleven; and the important night in the Lords was at hand.

"Lord Faulconcourt writes," said Mr. Dacre, "that they expect only thirty-eight against us."

"Ah! that terrible House of Lords!" said Miss Dacre. "Let us see: when does it come on—the day after to-morrow? Scarcely forty-eight hours and all will be over, and we shall be just where we were. You and your friends manage very badly in your House," she added, addressing herself to the Duke.

"I do all I can," said his Grace, smiling: "Burlington has my proxy."

"That is exactly what I complain of. On such an occasion, there should be no proxies. Personal attendance would indicate a keener interest in the result. Ah! if I were Duke of St. James for one night!"

"Ah! that you would be Duchess of St. James!" thought the Duke; but a despairing lover has no heart for jokes, and so he did not give utterance to the wish He felt a little agitated, and caught May Dacre's eye. She smiled, and slightly blushed, as if she felt the awkwardness of her remark, though too late.

The Duke retired early, but not to sleep. His mind was busied on a great deed. It was past midnight before he could compose his agitated feelings to repose, and by five o'clock he was again up. He dressed himself, and then put on a rough travelling coat,

which, with a shawl, effectually disguised his person; and putting in one pocket a shirt, and in the other a few articles from his dressing-case, the Duke of St James stole out of Castle Dacre, leaving a note for his host, accounting for his sudden departure by urgent business at Hauteville, and promising a return in a day or two.

The fresh morn had fully broke. He took his hurried way through the long dewy grass, and crossing the Park, gained the road, which, however, was not the high one. He had yet another hour's rapid walk, before he could reach his point of destination; and when that was accomplished, he found himself at a small public house, bearing for a sign his own arms, and situated in the high road opposite his own Park. He was confident that his person was unknown to the host, or to any of the early idlers who were lingering about the mail, then breakfasting.

"Any room, guard, to London?"

"Room inside, Sir,—just going off."

The door was opened, and the Duke of St. James took his seat in the Edinburgh and York Mail. He had two companions: the first, because apparently the most important, was a hard-featured, grey-headed gentleman, with a somewhat supercilious look, and a mingled air of acuteness and conceit; the other was a humble-looking widow in her weeds, middle-aged, and sad. These persons had recently roused themselves from their nocturnal slumbers, and now, after their welcome meal and hurried toilet, looked as fresh as birds.

"Well! now we are off," said the gentleman. "Very neat, cleanly little house this, Ma'am," continued he to his companion. "What is the sign?"—"The Hauteville arms."—"Oh! Hauteville—that is—that is—let me see!—the St. James family. Ah! a pretty fool that young man has made himself, by all accounts—Eh! Sir?"

"I have reason to believe so," said the Duke.

"I suppose this is his Park—eh? Hem! going to London, Sir?"

"I am."

"Ah! hem! Hauteville Park, I suppose, this. Fine ground wasted. What the use of Parks is, I can't say."

"The place seems well kept up," said the widow.

"So much the worse—I wish it were in ruins."

"Well, for my part," continued the widow in a low voice, "I think a Park nearly the most beautiful thing we have. Foreigners, you know, Sir———"

"Ah! I know what you are going to say," observed the gentleman in a curt, gruffish voice. "It is all nonsense. Foreigners are fools. Don't talk to me of beauty—a mere word. What is

the use of all this? It produces about as much benefit to society, as its owner does."

"And do you think his existence, then, perfectly useless?" asked the Duke.

"To be sure, I do. So the world will, some day or other. We are opening our eyes fast. Men begin to ask themselves what the use of an aristocracy is. That is the test, Sir."

"I think it not very difficult to demonstrate the use of an aristocracy," mildly observed the Duke.

"Pooh! nonsense, Sir! I know what you are going to say; but we have got beyond all that. Have you read this, Sir? This article on the aristocracy in 'The Screw and Lever Review?'"

"I have not, Sir."

"Then I advise you to make yourself master of it, and you will talk no more of the aristocracy. A few more articles like this, and a few more noblemen like the man who has got this Park, and people will open their eyes at last."

"I should think," said his Grace, "that the follies of the man who has got this Park have been productive of evil only to himself. In fact, sir, according to your own system, a prodigal noble seems to be a very desirable member of the commonwealth and a complete leveller."

"We shall get rid of them all soon, sir," said his companion, with a malignant smile.

"I have heard that he is very young, sir," remarked the widow.

"What is that to you or me?"

"Ah! youth is a very trying time. Let us hope the best! He may turn out well yet, poor soul!"

"I hope not. Don't talk to me of poor souls. There is a poor soul," said the utilitarian, pointing to an old man breaking stones on the highway. "That is what I call a poor soul, not a young prodigal, whose life has been one long career of infamous debauchery."

"You appear to have heard much of this young nobleman," said the Duke; "but it does not follow, sir, that you have heard truth."

"Very true, sir," said the widow. "The world is very foul-mouthed. Let us hope he is not so very bad."

"I tell you what, my friends; you know nothing about what you are talking of. I *don't* speak without foundation. You have not the least idea, sir, how this fellow has lived. Now, what I am going to tell you is a fact: I know it to be a fact. A very intimate friend of mine, who knows a person, who is a very intimate friend of an intimate friend of a person, who knows the Duke of

St. James, told me himself, that one night they had for supper—— what do you think, ma'am? Venison cutlets, each served up in a hundred pound note."

"Mercy!" exclaimed the widow.

"And do you believe it?" asked the Duke.

"Believe it! I know it!"

"He is very young," said the widow. "Youth is a very trying time."

"Nothing to do with his youth. It's the system, the infernal system. If that man had to work for his bread, like everybody else, do you think he would dine off bank notes? No! to be sure, he wouldn't! It's the system."

"Young people are very wild!" said the widow.

"Pooh! Ma'am. Nonsense! Don't talk cant. If a man be properly educated, he is as capable at one-and-twenty of managing anything, as at any time in his life: more capable. Look at the men who write 'The Screw and Lever;' the first men in the country. Look at them. Not one of age. Look at the man who wrote this article on the aristocracy, young Duncan Macmorrogh. Look at him, I say, the first man in the country by far."

"I never heard his name before," calmly observed the Duke.

"Not heard his name? Not heard of young Duncan Macmorrogh—the first man of the day, by far—not heard of him? Go and ask the Marquess of Sheepshead, what he thinks of him. Go and ask Lord Two and Two, what he thinks of him. Duncan dines with Lord Two and Two every week."

The Duke smiled, and his companion proceeded.

"Well, again, look at his friends. There is young First Principles. What a head that fellow has got! Here, this article on India is by him. He'll knock up their Charter. He is a clerk in the India House. Up to the detail, you see. Let me read you this passage on monopolies. Then there is young Tribonian Quirk. By G—, what a mind that fellow has got! By G—, nothing but first principles will go down with these fellows! They laugh at anything else. By G—, sir, they look upon the administration of the present day as a parcel of sucking babes! When I was last in town, Quirk told me that he would not give *that* for all the public men that ever existed! He is keeping his terms at Gray's Inn. This article on a new Code is by him. Shows as plain as light, that by sticking close to first principles, the laws of the country might be carried in every man's waistcoat-pocket."

The coach stopped, and a colloquy ensued.

"Any room to Selby?"

"Outside or in?"

"Out, to be sure."

"Room inside only."

"Well! in then."

The door opened, and a singularly quaint-looking personage presented himself. He was very stiff and prim in his appearance; dressed in a blue coat, and scarlet waistcoat, with a rich bandana handkerchief tied very neatly round his neck, and a very new hat, to which his head seemed little habituated.

"Sorry to disturb you, ladies and gentlemen; not exactly the proper place for me. Don't be alarmed. I'm always respectful wherever I am. My rule through life is to be respectful."

"Well, now, in with you," said the guard.

"Be respectful, my friend, and don't talk so to an old soldier who has served his King and his country."

Off they went.

"Majesty's service?" asked the stranger of the Duke.

"I have not that honour."

"Hum! Lawyer, perhaps?"

"Not a lawyer."

"Hum! A gentleman, I suppose?"

The Duke was silent; and so the stranger addressed himself to the anti-aristocrat, who seemed vastly annoyed by the intrusion of so low a personage.

"Going to London, sir?"

"I tell you what, my friend, at once. I never answer impertinent questions."

"No offence, I hope, sir! Sorry to offend. I'm always respectful. Madam! I hope I don't inconvenience you; I should be sorry to do that. We sailors, you know, are always ready to accommodate the ladies."

"Sailor!" exclaimed the acute utilitarian, his curiosity stifling his hauteur. "Why! just now, I thought you were a soldier."

"Well! so I am."

"Well, my friend, you are a conjuror then."

"No, I ayn't; I'm a marine."

"A very useless person, then."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean to say, that if the sailors were properly educated, such an amphibious corps would never have been formed, and some of the most atrocious sinecures ever tolerated would consequently not have existed."

"Sinecures! I never heard of him. I served under Lord Combermere. Maybe you have heard of him, ma'am? A nice

man—a beautiful man. I have seen him stand in a field like that, with the shot falling about him like hail, and caring no more for them than peas."

"If that were for bravado," said the utilitarian, "I think it a very silly thing."

"Bravado! I never heard of him. It was for his King and country."

"Was it in India?" asked the widow.

"In a manner, ma'am," said the marine, very courteously. "At Bhurtpore, up by Pershy, and thereabouts; the lake of Cashmere, where all the shawls come from. Maybe you have heard of Cashmere, ma'am?"

"Who has not heard of the lake of Cashmere!" hummed the Duke to himself.

"Ah! I thought so," said the marine; "all people know much the same; for some have seen, and some have read. I can't read, but I have served my King and country for five-and-twenty years, and I have used my eyes."

"Better than reading," said the Duke, humouring the character.

"I'll tell you what," said the marine, with a knowing look. "I suspect there is a d—d lot of lies in your books. I landed in England last seventh of June, and went to see St. Paul's. 'This is the greatest building in the world,' says the man. Thinks I, 'You lie.' I did not tell him so, because I am always respectful. I tell you what, sir; maybe you think St. Paul's the greatest building in the world, but I tell you what, it's a lie. I have seen one greater. Maybe, ma'am, you think I am telling you a lie too; but I am not. Go and ask Captain Jones, of the 58th. I went with him: I give you his name: go and ask Captain Jones, of the 58th, if I be telling you a lie. The building I mean is the palace of the Sultan Acber; for I have served my King and country five-and-twenty years last seventh of June, and have seen strange things—all built of precious stones, ma'am. What do you think of that? All built of precious stones: carnelian, of which you make your seals; as sure as I'm a sinner saved. If I ayn't speaking the truth, I am not going to Selby. Maybe you'd like to know why I am going to Selby? I'll tell you what. Five-and-twenty years have I served my King and country last seventh of June. Now I begin with the beginning. I ran away from home, when I was eighteen, you see; and after the siege of Bhurtpore, I was sitting on a bale of silk alone, and I said to myself, I'll go and see my mother. Sure as I am going to Selby, that's the whole. I landed in England last seventh of June, absent five-and-twenty years, serving my King and country. I sent them a

letter last night. I put it in the post myself. Maybe I shall be there before my letter now."

"To be sure you will," said the utilitarian: "what made you do such a silly thing? Why, your letter is in this coach."

"Well! I shouldn't wonder. I shall be there before my letter now. All nonsense, letters: my wife wrote it at Falmouth."

"You are married, then?" said the widow.

"Ayn't I, though? The sweetest cretur, madam, though I say it before you, that ever lived."

"Why did you not bring your wife with you?" asked the widow.

"And wouldn't I be very glad to? but she wouldn't come among strangers at once; and so I have got a letter, which she wrote for me, to put in the post, in case they are glad to see me, and then she will come on."

"And you, I suppose, are not sorry to have a holiday," said the Duke.

"Ayn't I, though? Ayn't I as low about leaving her, as ever I was in my life; and so is the poor cretur. She won't eat a bit of victuals till I come back, I'll be sworn—not a bit, I'll be bound to say that—and myself, although I am an old soldier, and served my King and country for five-and-twenty years, and so got knocked about, and used to anything, as it were—I don't know how it is, but I always feel queer whenever I am away from her. I shan't make a hearty meal till I see her. Somehow or other, when I am away from her, everything feels dry in the throat."

"You are very fond of her, I see," said the Duke.

"And ought I not to be? Didn't I ask her three times before she said *yes*? Those are the wives for wear, sir. None of the fruit that falls at a shaking for me! Hasn't she stuck by me in every climate, and in every land I was in? Not a fellow in the company had such a wife. Wouldn't I throw myself off this coach this moment, to give her a moment's peace? That I would though; d—n me if I wouldn't."

"Hush! hush!" said the widow; "never swear. I am afraid you talk too much of your love," she added, with a faint smile.

"Ah! you don't know my wife, ma'am. Are you married, sir?"

"I have not that happiness," said the Duke.

"Well! there is nothing like it! but don't take the fruit that falls at a shake. But this, I suppose, is Selby."

The marine took his departure, having stayed long enough to raise in the young Duke's mind curious feelings.

As he was plunged into reverie, and as the widow was silent, conversation was not resumed until the coach stopped for dinner.

"We stop here half an hour, gentlemen," said the guard. "Mrs. Burnet," he continued, to the widow, "let me hand you out."

They entered the parlour of the inn. The Duke, who was ignorant of the etiquette of the road, did not proceed to the discharge of his duties, as the youngest guest, with all the promptness desired by his fellow-travellers.

"Now, sir," said an outside, "I will thank you for a slice of that mutton, and will join you, if you have no objection, in a bottle of sherry."

"What you please, sir. May I have the pleasure of helping you, ma'am?"

After dinner, the Duke took advantage of a vacant outside place.

Tom Rawlins was the model of a guard. Young, robust, and gay, he had a letter, a word, or a wink for all he met. All seasons were the same to him: night or day, he was ever awake, and ever alive to all the interest of the road: now joining in conversation with a passenger, shrewd, sensible, and respectful; now exchanging a little elegant badinage with the coachman; now bowing to a pretty girl; now quizzing a passer-by: he was off and on his seat in an instant; and, in the whiff of his cigar, would lock a wheel, or unlock a passenger.

From him, the young Duke learned that his fellow-inside was Mr. Duncan Macmorrogh, senior, a writer at Edinburgh, and, of course, the father of the first man of the day. Tom Rawlins could not tell his Grace as much about the principal writer in "The Screw and Lever Review" as we can; for Tom was no patron of our periodical literature, farther than a police report in the Publican's Journal. Young Duncan Macmorrogh, was a limb of the law, who had just brought himself into notice by a series of articles in "The Screw and Lever," in which he had subjected the Universe piecemeal to his critical analysis. Duncan Macmorrogh cut up the Creation, and got a name. His attack upon Mountains was most violent, and proved, by its personality, that he had come from the Lowlands. He demonstrated the inutility of all elevation, and declared that the Andes were the aristocracy of the globe. Rivers he rather patronized; but flowers he quite pulled to pieces, and proved them to be the most useless of existences. Duncan Macmorrogh informed us, that we were quite wrong in supposing ourselves to be the miracle of the Creation. On the contrary, he avowed that already there were various pieces of machinery of far more importance than man; and he had no doubt, in time, that a superior race would arise, got by a steam-engine on a spinning-jenny.

The other "inside" was the widow of a former curate of a Northumbrian village. Some friend had obtained for her only child a clerkship in a public office, and, for some time, this idol of her heart had gone on prospering; but unfortunately, of late, Charles Burnet had got into a bad set, was now involved in a terrible scrape, and, as Tom Rawlins feared, must lose his situation and go to ruin.

"She was half distracted when she heard it first, poor creature! I have known her all my life, sir. Many the kind word and glass of ale I have had at her house, and that's what makes me feel for her, you see. I do what I can to make the journey easy to her, for it is a pull at her years. God bless her! there is not a better body in this world; that I will say for her. When I was a boy, I used to be the playfellow in a manner with Charley Burnet, a gay lad, sir, as ever you'd wish to see in a summer's day,—and the devil among the girls always, and that's been the ruin of him; and as open-a-hearted fellow as ever lived. Damn me! I'd walk to the land's end to save him, if it were only for his mother's sake,—to say nothing of himself."

"And can nothing be done?" asked the Duke.

"Why, you see, he is back in £. *s. d.*; and, to make it up, the poor body must sell her all, and he won't let her do it, and wrote a letter like a prince,—(No room, sir,)—as fine a letter as ever you read—(Hillon, there! What! are you asleep?)—as ever you read on a summer's day. I didn't see it, but my mother told me it was as good as e'er a one of the old gentleman's sermons. 'Mother,' said he, 'my sins be upon my own head. I can bear disgrace,—(How do, Mr. Wilkins?)—but I cannot bear to see you a beggar!'"

"Poor fellow!"

"Ay! sir, as good-a-hearted fellow as ever you'd wish to meet!"

"Is he involved to a great extent, think you?"

"Oh! a long figure, sir,—(I say, Betty, I've got a letter for you from your sweetheart,)—a very long figure, sir—(Here, take it!)—I should be sorry—(Don't blush—no message?)—I should be sorry to take two hundred pounds to pay it. No, I wouldn't take two hundred pounds, that I wouldn't—(I say, Jacob, stop at old Bag Smith's)."

Night came on, and the Duke resumed his inside place. Mr. Macmorrogh went to sleep over his son's article; and the Duke feigned slumber, though he was only indulging in reverie. He opened his eyes, and a light, which they passed, revealed the countenance of the widow. Tears were stealing down her face.

"I have no mother—I have no one to weep for me," thought the Duke; "and yet, if I had been in this youth's station, my career probably would have been as fatal. Let me assist her. Alas! how I have misused my power, when, even to do this slight deed, I am obliged to hesitate, and consider whether it be practicable."

The coach again stopped for a quarter of an hour. The Duke had, in consideration of the indefinite period of his visit, supplied himself amply with money on repairing to Dacre. Besides his purse, which was well stored for the road, he had somewhat more than three hundred pounds in his note-book. He took advantage of their tarrying, to inclose it, and its contents, in a sheet of paper, with these lines:

"An unknown friend requests Mrs. Burnet to accept this token of his sympathy with suffering virtue."

Determined to find some means to put this in her possession before their parting, he resumed his place. The Scotchman now prepared for his night's repose. He produced a pillow for his back, a bag for his feet, and a cap for his head. These, and a glass of brandy-and-water, in time produced a due effect, and he was soon fast asleep. Even to the widow, night brought some solace. The Duke alone found no repose. Unused to travelling in public conveyances at night, and unprovided with any of the ingenious expedients of a mail-coach adventurer, he felt all the inconveniences of an inexperienced traveller. The seat was unendurably hard, his back ached, his head whirled, the confounded sherry, slight as was his portion, had made him feverish, and he felt at once excited and exhausted. He was sad, too,—very depressed. Alone, and no longer surrounded with that splendour which had hitherto made solitude precious, life seemed stripped of all its ennobling spirit. His energy vanished. He repented his rashness; and the impulse of the previous night, which had gathered fresh power from the dewy moon, vanished. He felt alone, and without a friend, and night passed without a moment's slumber, watching the driving clouds.

The last fifteen miles seemed longer than the whole journey. At St. Alban's he got out, took a cup of coffee with Tom Rawlins, and, although the morning was raw, again seated himself by his side. In the first gloomy little suburb Mrs. Burnet got out. The Duke sent Rawlins after her with the parcel, with peremptory instructions to leave it. He watched the widow protesting it was not hers, his faithful emissary appealing to the direction, and, with delight, he observed it left in her hands. They rattled into London, stopped in Lombard-street, reached Holborn, entered an archway; the coachman threw the whip and reins from his now

careless hands. The Duke bade farewell to Tom Rawlins, and was shown to a bed.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE return of morning had in some degree dissipated the gloom that had settled on the young Duke during the night. Sound and light made him feel less forlorn, and for a moment his soul again responded to his high purpose. But now he was to seek necessary repose. In vain. His heated frame and anxious mind were alike restless. He turned, he tossed in his bed, but he could not banish from his ear the whirling sound of his late conveyance, the snore of Mr. Macmorrogh, and the voice of Tom Rawlins. He kept dwelling on every petty incident of his journey, and repeating in his mind every petty saying. His determination to slumber made him even less sleepy. Conscious that repose was absolutely necessary to the performance of his task, and dreading that the boon was now unattainable, he became each moment more feverish and more nervous; a crowd of half-formed ideas and images flitted over his heated brain. Failure, misery, May Dacre, Tom Rawlins, boiled beef, Mrs. Burnet, the aristocracy, mountains and the marine, and the tower of St. Alban's cathedral, hurried along in infinite confusion. But there is nothing like experience. In a state of distraction, he remembered the hopeless but refreshing sleep he had gained after his fatal adventure at Brighton. He jumped out of bed, and threw himself on the floor, and in a few minutes, from the same cause, his excited senses subsided into slumber.

He awoke: the sun was shining through his rough shutter. It was noon. He jumped up, rang the bell, and asked for a bath. The chambermaid did not seem exactly to comprehend his meaning, but said she would speak to the waiter. He was the first gentleman who ever had asked for a bath at the Dragon with Two Tails. The waiter informed him that he might get a bath, he believed, at the Hummums. The Duke dressed, and to the Hummums he then took his way. As he was leaving the yard, he was followed by an ostler, who, in a voice musically hoarse, thus addressed him:

"Have you seen mississ, sir?"

"Do you mean me? No, I have not seen your mississ;" and the Duke proceeded.

"Sir, sir," said the ostler, running after him, "I think you said you had not seen mississ?"

"You think right," said the Duke, astonished; and again he walked on.

"Sir, sir," said the pursuing ostler,—"I don't think you have got any luggage?"

"Oh! I beg your pardon," said the Duke; "I see it. I am in your debt; but I meant to return."

"No doubt on't, sir; but when gemmen don't have no luggage, they sees mississ before they go, sir."

"Well, what am I in your debt? I can pay you here."

"Five shillings, sir."

"Here!" said the Duke; "and tell me when a coach leaves this place to-morrow for Yorkshire."

"Half-past six o'clock in the morning precisely," said the ostler.

"Well, my good fellow, I depend upon your securing me a place; and that is for yourself," added his Grace, throwing him a sovereign. "Now, mind; I depend upon you."

The man stared, as if he had been suddenly taken into partnership with mississ; at length he found his tongue.

"Your honour may depend upon me. Where would you like to sit? In or out? Back to your horses, or the front? Get you the box, if you like. Where's your great coat, sir? I'll brush it for you."

The bath and the breakfast brought our hero round a good deal, and at half-past two he stole to a solitary part of St. James' Park, to stretch his legs and collect his senses. We must now let our readers into a secret, which perhaps they have already unravelled. The Duke had hurried to London, with the determination, not only of attending the debate, but of participating in it. His Grace was no politician; but the question at issue was one simple in its nature, and so domestic in its spirit, that few men could have arrived at his period of life without having heard its merits, both too often and too amply discussed. He was master of all the points of interest, and he had sufficient confidence in himself to believe that he could do them justice. He walked up and down, conning over in his mind, not only the remarks which he intended to make, but the very language in which he meant to offer them. As he formed sentences, almost for the first time, his courage and his fancy alike warmed: his sanguine spirit sympathised with the nobility of the imaginary scene, and inspirited the intonations of his modulated voice.

About four o'clock he repaired to the House. Walking up one of the passages, his progress was stopped by the back of an in-

dividual bowing with great civility to a patronising Peer, and my-Lording him with painful repetition. The nobleman was Lord Fitz-pompey; the bowing gentleman, Mr. Duncan Macmorrogh, the anti-aristocrat, and father of the first man of the day.

"George! is it possible!" exclaimed Lord Fitz-pompey.

"I will speak to you in the House," said the Duke, passing on, and bowing to Mr. Donald Macmorrogh.

He recalled his proxy from the Duke of Burlington, and accounted for his presence to many astonished friends by being on his way to the Continent: and, passing through London, thought he might as well be present, particularly as he was about to reside for some time in Catholic countries. It was the last compliment that he could pay his future host. "Give me a pinch of snuff."

The debate began. Don't be alarmed. I shall not describe it. Five or six Peers had spoken, and one of the Ministers had just sat down when the Duke of St. James rose. He was extremely nervous, but he repeated to himself the name of May Dacre for the hundredth time, and proceeded. He was nearly commencing "May Dacre" instead of "My Lords," but he escaped this blunder. For the first five or ten minutes, he spoke in almost as cold and lifeless a style, as when he echoed the King's speech; but he was young, and seldom troubled them, and was listened to therefore with indulgence. The Duke warmed, and a courteous "hear, hear," frequently sounded; the Duke became totally free from embarrassment, and spoke with equal eloquence and energy. A cheer, a stranger in the House of Lords, rewarded and encouraged him. As an Irish landlord, his sincerity could not be disbelieved, when he expressed his conviction of the safety of emancipation; but it was as an English proprietor and British noble, that it was evident that his Grace felt most keenly upon this important measure. He described with power the peculiar injustice of the situation of the English Catholics. He professed to feel keenly upon this subject, because his native county had made him well acquainted with the temper of this class; he painted in glowing terms the loyalty, the wealth, the influence, the noble virtues, of his Catholic neighbours; and he closed a speech of an hour's duration, in which he had shown, that a worn subject was susceptible of novel treatment, and novel interest, amid loud and general cheers. The Lords gathered round him, and many personally congratulated him upon his distinguished success. The debate took its course. At three o'clock, the pro-Catholics found themselves in a minority, but a minority in which the prescient might have well discovered the herald of future justice. The speech of the Duke of St. James was the speech of the night.

The Duke walked into White's. It was crowded. The first man who welcomed him was Annesley. He congratulated the Duke with a warmth for which the world did not give him credit.

"I assure you, my dear St. James, that I am one of the few people whom this display has not surprised. I have long observed that you were formed for something better than mere frivolity. And, between ourselves, I am sick of it. Don't be surprised if you hear that I go to Algiers. Depend upon it, that I am on the point of doing something dreadful."

"Sup with me, St. James," said Lord Squib; "I will ask O'Connell to meet you."

Lord Fitz-pompey and Lord Darrell were profuse in congratulations; but he broke away from them, to welcome the man who now advanced. He was one of whom he never thought without a shudder, but whom, for all that, he greatly liked.

"My dear Duke of St. James," said Arundel Dacre, "how ashamed I am that this is the first time I have personally thanked you for all your goodness!"

"My dear Dacre, I have to thank you for proving for the first time to the world, that I was not without discrimination."

"No, no," said Dacre, gaily and easily: "all the congratulations and all the compliments to-night shall be for you. Believe me, my dear friend, I share your triumph."

They shook hands with earnestness.

"May will read your speech with exultation," said Arundel. "I think we must thank her for making you an orator."

The Duke faintly smiled, and shook his head.

"And how are all our Yorkshire friends?" continued Arundel. "I am disappointed again in getting down to them; but I hope, in the course of the month, to pay them a visit."

"I shall see them in a day or two," said the Duke. "I pay Mr. Dacre one more visit before my departure from England."

"Are you then indeed going?" asked Arundel, in a kind voice.

"For ever."

"Nay, nay, *ever* is a strong word."

"It becomes then my feelings. However, we will not talk of this. Can I bear any letter for you?"

"I have just written," replied Arundel, in a gloomy voice, and with a changing countenance, "and therefore will not trouble you. And yet——"

"What!"

"And yet the letter is an important letter—to me. The post, to be sure, never does miss,—but if it were not troubling your Grace too much, I almost would ask you to be its bearer."

"It will be there as soon," said the Duke, "for I shall be off in an hour."

"I will take it out of the box then," said Arundel; and he fetched it. "Here is the letter," said he on his return: "pardon me if I impress upon you its importance. Excuse this emotion, but, indeed, this letter decides my fate. My happiness for life is dependent on its reception!"

He spoke with an air and voice of agitation.

The Duke received the letter in a manner scarcely less disturbed; and with a hope that they might meet before his departure, faintly murmured by one party, and scarcely responded to by the other, they parted.

"Well, now," said the Duke, "the farce is complete; and I have come to London to be the bearer of his offered heart! I like this, now. Is there a more contemptible—a more ludicrous—absolutely ludicrous ass than myself? Fear not for its delivery, most religiously shall it be consigned to the hand of its owner. The fellow has paid a compliment to my honour or my simplicity: I fear the last, and really I feel rather proud. But away with these feelings! Have I not seen her in his arms? Pah, pah, pah! Thank God! I spoke. At least, I die in a blaze. Even Annesley does not think me quite a fool. O, May Dacre, May Dacre! if you were but mine, I should be the happiest fellow that ever breathed!"

He breakfasted, and then took his way to the Dragon with Two Tails. The morning was bright, and fresh, and beautiful, even in London. Joy came upon his heart, in spite of all his loneliness, and he was glad and sanguine. He arrived just in time. The coach was about to start. The faithful ostler was there with his great coat, and the Duke found that he had three fellow-passengers. They were lawyers, and talked for the first two hours of nothing but the case respecting which they were going down into the country. At Woburn, a despatch arrived with the newspapers. All purchased one, and the Duke among the rest. He was well reported, and could now sympathise with, instead of smile at, the anxiety of Lord Darrell.

"The young Duke of St. James seems to have distinguished himself very much," said the first lawyer.

"So I observe," said the second one. "The leading article calls our attention to his speech as the most brilliant delivered."

"I am surprised," said the third. "I thought he was quite a different sort of person."

"By no means," said the first: "I have always had a very high opinion of him. I am not one of those who think the worse of a young man because he is a little wild."

"Nor I," said the second. "Young blood, you know, is young blood."

"A very intimate friend of mine, who knows the Duke of St. James well, once told me," rejoined the first, "that I was quite mistaken about him; that he was a person of no common talents, well read, quite a man of the world, and a good deal of wit, too; and let me tell you that in these days wit is no common thing."

"Certainly not," said the third. "We have no wit, now."

"And a very kind-hearted, generous fellow," continued the first, "and *very* unaffected."

"I can't bear an affected man," said the second, without looking off his paper. "He seems to have made a very fine speech indeed."

"I should not wonder at his turning out something great," said the third.

"I have no doubt of it," said the second.

"Many of these wild fellows do."

"He is not so wild as we think," said the first.

"But he is done up," said the second.

"Is he indeed?" said the third. "Perhaps by making a speech, he wants a place?"

"People don't make speeches for nothing," said the third.

"I shouldn't wonder if he is after a place in the Household," said the second.

"Depend upon it, he looks to something more active," said the first.

"Perhaps he would like to be head of the Admiralty?" said the second.

"Or the Treasury?" said the third.

"That is impossible!" said the first. "He is too young."

"He is as old as Pitt," said the third.

"I hope he will resemble him in nothing but his age, then," said the first.

"I look upon Pitt as the first man that ever lived," said the third.

"What!" said the first. "The man who worked up the National Debt to nearly eight hundred millions!"

"What of that?" said the third. "I look upon the National Debt as the source of all our prosperity."

"The source of all our taxes, you mean."

"What is the harm of taxes?"

"The harm is, that you will soon have no trade; and when you have no trade, you will have no duties; and when you have no duties, you will have no dividends; and when you have no dividends,

you will have no law; and then, where is your source of prosperity?" said the first.

But here the coach stopped, and the Duke got out for an hour.

By midnight they had reached a town not more than thirty miles from Dacre. The Duke was quite exhausted, and determined to stop. In half an hour he enjoyed that deep, dreamless slumber, with which no luxury can compete. One must have passed restless nights for years, to be able to appreciate the value of sound sleep.

CHAPTER IX.

He rose early, and managed to reach Dacre at the breakfast hour of the family. He discharged his chaise at the Park gate, and entered the house unseen. He took his way along a corridor lined with plants, which led to the small and favourite room in which the morning meetings of May and himself always took place when they were alone. As he lightly stepped along, he heard a voice that he could not mistake, as it were in animated converse. Agitated by sounds which ever created in him emotion, for a moment he paused. He starts,—his eye sparkles with strange delight,—a flush comes over his panting features, half of modesty, half of triumph. He listens to his own speech from the lips of the woman he loves. She is reading to her father with melodious energy the passage in which he describes the high qualities of his Catholic neighbours. The intonations of the voice indicate the deep sympathy of the reader. She ceases. He hears the admiring exclamation of his host. He rallies his strength,—he advances,—he stands before them. She utters almost a shriek of delightful surprise as she welcomes him.

How much there was to say!—how much to ask!—how much to answer! Even Mr. Dacre poured forth questions like a boy. But May——she could not speak, but leant forward in her chair with an eager ear, and a look of congratulation, that rewarded him for all his exertion. Everything was to be told. How he went;—whether he slept in the mail;—where he went;—what he did;—whom he saw;—what they said;—what they thought;——all must be answered. Then fresh exclamations of wonder, delight, and triumph. The Duke forgot everything but his love, and for three hours felt the happiest of men.

At length Mr. Dacre rose and looked at his watch with a shaking head. "I have a most important appointment," said he, "and I must gallop to keep it. God bless you, my dear St. James! I could stay talking with you for ever; but you must be utterly wearied. Now, my dear boy, go to bed."

"To bed!" exclaimed the Duke. "Why, Tom Rawlins would laugh at you!"

"And who is Tom Rawlins?"

"Ah! I cannot tell you everything; but assuredly I am not going to bed."

"Well, May, I leave him to your care; but do not let him talk any more."

"Oh! sir," said the Duke, "I really had forgotten. I am the bearer to you, sir, of a letter from Mr. Arundel Dacre." He gave it him.

As Mr. Dacre read the communication, his countenance changed, and the smile which before was on his face, vanished. But whether he were displeased, or only serious, it was impossible to ascertain, although the Duke watched him narrowly. At length he said, "May! here is a letter from Arundel, in which you are much interested."

"Give it me, then, papa!"

"No, my love; we must speak of this together. But I am pressed for time. When I come home. Remember." He quitted the room.

They were alone: the Duke began again talking, and Miss Dacre put her finger to her mouth, with a smile.

"I assure you," said he, "I am not wearied. I slept at ——y, and the only thing I now want is a good walk. Let me be your companion this morning!"

"I was thinking of paying Nurse a visit. What say you?"

"Oh! I am ready; anywhere."

She ran for her bonnet, and he kissed her handkerchief, which she left behind, and, I believe, everything else in the room which bore the slightest relation to her. And then the recollection of Arundel's letter came over him, and his joy fled. When she returned, he was standing before the fire, gloomy and dull.

"I fear you are tired," she said.

"Not in the least."

"I shall never forgive myself if all this exertion make you ill."

"Why not?"

"Because, although I will not tell papa, I am sure my nonsense is the cause of your having gone to London."

"It is probable; for you are the cause of all that does not disgrace me." He advanced, and was about to seize her hand; but

the accursed miniature occurred to him, and he repressed his feelings, almost with a groan. She, too, had turned away her head, and was busily engaged in tending a flower.

"Because she has explicitly declared her feelings to me, and, sincere in that declaration, honours me by a friendship of which alone I am unworthy, am I to persecute her with my dishonoured overtures—the twice rejected? No, no!" He took up his hat, and offered her his arm.

They took their way through the Park, and he soon succeeded in re-assuming the tone that befitted their situation. Traits of the debate, and the debaters, which newspapers cannot convey, and which he had not yet recounted,—anecdotes of Annesley and their friends, and other gossip, were offered for her amusement. But if she were amused, she was not lively, but singularly, unusually silent. There was only one point on which she seemed interested, and that was his speech. When he was cheered, and who particularly cheered; who gathered round him, and what they said after the debate: on all these points she was most inquisitive.

They rambled on: Nurse was quite forgotten; and at length they found themselves in the beautiful valley, rendered more lovely by the ruins of the abbey. It was a place that the Duke could never forget, and which he ever avoided. He had never renewed his visit since he first gave vent, among its reverend ruins, to his overcharged and most tumultuous heart.

They stood in silence before the holy pile with its vaulting arches and crumbling walls, mellowed by the mild lustre of the declining sun. Not two years had fled since here he first staggered after the breaking glimpses of self-knowledge, and struggled to call order from out the chaos of his mind. Not two years, and yet what a change had come over his existence! How diametrically opposite now were all his thoughts, and views, and feelings, to those which then controlled his fatal soul! How capable, as he firmly believed, was he now of discharging his duty to his Creator and his fellow-men! and yet the boon that ought to have been the reward for all this self-contest, the sweet seal that ought to have ratified this new contract of existence, was wanting.

"Ah!" he exclaimed aloud, and in a voice of anguish,—"ah! if I ne'er had left the walls of Dacre, how different might have been my lot!"

A gentle but involuntary pressure reminded him of the companion whom, for once in his life, he had for a moment forgotten.

"I feel it is madness,—I feel it is worse than madness; but must I yield without a struggle, and see my dark fate cover me without an effort? Oh! yes, here, even here, where I have wept over your contempt,—even here, although I subject myself to

renewed rejection, let, let me tell you, before we part, how I adore you!"

She was silent; a strange courage came over his spirit; and, with a reckless boldness, and rapid voice, a misty sight, and total unconsciousness of all other existence, he resumed the words which had broken out, as if by inspiration.

"I am not worthy of you. Who is? I was worthless. I did not know it. Have not I struggled to be pure? have not I sighed on my nightly pillow for your blessing? Oh! could you read my heart,—and sometimes, I think, you can read it, for indeed, with all its faults, it is without guile—I dare to hope, that you would pity me. Since we first met, your image has not quitted my conscience for a second. When you thought me least worthy,—when you thought me vile, or mad,—oh! by all that is sacred, I was the most miserable wretch that ever breathed, and flew to dissipation, only for distraction!

"Not, not for a moment have I ceased to think you the best, the most beautiful, the most enchanting and endearing creature that ever graced our earth. Even when I first dared to whisper my insolent affection, believe me, even then, your presence controlled my spirit as no other woman had. I bent to you then in pride and power. The station that I could then offer you was not utterly unworthy of your perfection. I am now a beggar, or, worse, an insolvent noble, and dare I, dare I to ask you to share the fortunes that are broken, and the existence that is obscure?"

She turned; her arm fell over his shoulder; she buried her head in his breast.

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Dacre returned home with an excellent appetite, and almost as keen a desire to renew his conversation with his guest; but dinner and the Duke were neither to be commanded. Miss Dacre also could not be found. No information could be obtained of them from any quarter. It was nearly seven o'clock, the hour of dinner. That meal, somewhat to Mr. Dacre's regret, was postponed for half an hour, servants were sent out, and the bell was rung, but no tidings. Mr. Dacre was a little annoyed and more alarmed; he was also hungry, and at half-past seven he sat down to a solitary meal.

About a quarter past eight, a figure rapped at the dining-room window: it was the young Duke. The fat butler seemed astonished, not to say shocked, at this violation of etiquette; nevertheless, he slowly opened the window.

"Anything the matter, George? Where is May?"

"Nothing. We lost our way. That is all. May—Miss Dacre desired me to say, that she would not join us at dinner."

"I am sure, something has happened."

"I assure you, my dear sir, nothing, nothing at all the least unpleasant, but we took the wrong turning. All my fault."

"Shall I send for the soup?"

"No. I am not hungry—I will take some wine." So saying, his Grace poured out a tumbler of claret.

"Shall I take your Grace's hat?" asked the fat butler.

"Dear me! have I my hat on?"

This was not the only evidence afforded by our hero's conduct that his presence of mind had slightly deserted him. He was soon buried in a deep reverie, and sat with a full plate, but idle knife and fork before him,—a perfect puzzle to the fat butler, who had hitherto considered his Grace the very pink of propriety.

"George, you have eaten no dinner," said Mr. Dacre.

"Thank you, a very good one indeed—a remarkably good dinner. Give me some red wine, if you please."

At length they were left alone.

"I have some good news for you, George."

"Indeed!"

"I think I have let Rosemount."

"So!"

"And exactly to the kind of person that you wanted, a man who will take a pride, although merely a tenant, in not permitting his

poor neighbours to feel the *want* of a landlord. You will never guess,—Lord Mildmay!"

"What did you say of Lord Mildmay, sir?"

"My dear fellow, your wits are wool-gathering—I say, I think I have let Rosemount."

"Oh! I have changed my mind about letting Rosemount."

"My dear Duke, there is no trouble which I will grudge, to further your interests; but really I must beg, in future, that you will, at least, apprise me when you change your mind. There is nothing, as we have both agreed, more desirable than to find an eligible tenant for Rosemount. You never can expect to have a more beneficial one than Lord Mildmay; and really, unless you have positively promised the place to another person, which, excuse me for saying, you were not authorised to do, I must insist, after what has passed, upon his having the preference."

"My dear, sir, I only changed my mind this afternoon: I couldn't tell you before. I have promised it to no one; but I think of living there myself."

"Yourself! Oh! if that be the case, I shall be quite reconciled to the disappointment of Lord Mildmay. But what in the name of goodness, my dear fellow, has produced this wonderful revolution in all your plans in the course of a few hours? I thought you were going to mope away life on the Lake of Geneva, or dawdle it away in Florence or Rome."

"It is very odd, sir. I can hardly believe it myself:—and yet it must be true. I hear her voice even at this moment. Oh! my dear Mr. Dacre, I am the happiest fellow that ever breathed!"

"What is all this?"

"Is it possible, my dear sir, that you have not long before detected the feelings I ventured to entertain for your daughter? In a word, she requires only your sanction to my being the most fortunate of men."

"My dear friend,—my dear, dear boy!" cried Mr. Dacre, rising from his chair and embracing him, "it is out of the power of man to impart to me any event which could afford me such exquisite pleasure! Indeed, indeed, it is to me most surprising! for I had been induced to suspect, George, that some explanation had passed between you and May, which, while it accounted for your mutual esteem, gave little hope of a stronger sentiment."

"I believe, sir," said the young Duke with a smile, "I was obstinate."

"Well, this changes all our plans. I have intended, for this fortnight past, to speak to you finally on your affairs. No better time than the present: and, in the first place——"

But, really, this interview is confidential.

CHAPTER XI.

THEY come not: it is late. He is already telling all! She relapses into her sweet reverie. Her thought fixes on no subject: her mind is intent on no idea: her soul is melted into dreamy delight: her only consciousness is perfect bliss! Sweet sounds still echo in her ear, and still her pure pulse beats, from the first embrace of passion.

The door opens, and her father enters, leaning upon the arm of her beloved. Yes—he has told all! Mr. Dacre approached, and, bending down, pressed the lips of his child. It was the seal to their plighted faith, and told, without speech, that the blessing of a parent mingled with the vows of a lover! No other intimation was at present necessary: but she, the daughter, thought now only of her father, that friend of her long life, whose love had ne'er been wanting,—was she about to leave him? She arose: she threw her arms around his neck and wept.

The young Duke walked away, that his presence might not control the full expression of her hallowed soul. "This jewel is mine," was his thought: "what, what have I done to be so blessed!"

In a few minutes he again joined them, and was seated by her side; and Mr. Dacre considerately remembered that he wished to see his steward, and they were left alone. Their eyes meet, and their soft looks tell that they were thinking of each other. His arm steals round the back of her chair, and with his other hand he gently captures hers.

First love, first love!—how many a glowing bard has sung thy beauties! How many a poor devil of a prosing novelist, like myself, has echoed all our superiors, the poets, teach us! No doubt, thou rosy god of young Desire, thou art a most bewitching little demon; and yet, for my part, give me last love.

Ask a man, which turned out best,—the first horse he bought, or the one he now canters on? Ask—but, in short, there is nothing in which knowledge is more important, and experience more valuable, than in love. When we first love, we are enamoured of our own imaginations. Our thoughts are high, our feelings rise from out the deepest caves of the tumultuous tide of our full life. We look around for one to share our exquisite existence, and sanctify the beauties of our being.

But those beauties are only in our thoughts. We feel like heroes, when we are but boys. Yet our mistress must bear a relation, not to ourselves, but to our imagination. She must be a real

heroine, while our perfection is but ideal. And the quick and dangerous fancy of our race will, at first, rise to the pitch. She is all—we can conceive. Mild and pure as youthful priests, we bow down before our altar. But the idol to which we breathe our warm and gushing vows, and bend our eager knees—all its power, does it not exist only in our idea—all its beauty, is it not the creation of our excited fancy? And then the sweetest of superstitions ends. The long delusion bursts, and we are left like men upon a heath when fairies vanish:—cold and dreary, gloomy, bitter, harsh, existence seems a blunder.

But just when we are most miserable, and curse the poet's cunning and our own conceits, there lights upon our path, just like a ray fresh from the sun, some sparkling child of light, that makes us think we are premature, at least, in our resolves. Yet we are determined not to be taken in, and try her well in all the points in which the others failed. One by one, her charms steal on our warming soul, as, one by one, those of the other beauty sadly stole away, and then we bless our stars, and feel quite sure that we have found perfection in a petticoat.

But our Duke—where are we? He had read woman thoroughly, and consequently knew how to value the virgin pages on which his thoughts now fixed. He and May Dacre wandered in the woods, and nature seemed to them more beautiful from their beautiful loves. They gazed upon the sky; a brighter light fell o'er the luminous earth. Sweeter to them the fragrance of the sweetest flowers, and a more balmy breath brought on the universal promise of the opening year.

They wandered in the woods, and there they breathed their mutual adoration. She to him was all in all, and he to her was like a new divinity. She poured forth all that she long had felt, and scarcely could suppress. From the moment he tore her from the insulter's arms, his image fixed in her heart, and the struggle which she experienced to repel his renewed vows was great indeed. When she heard of his misfortunes, she had wept; but it was the strange delight she experienced, when his letter arrived to her father, that first convinced her how irrevocably her mind was his.

And now she does not cease to blame herself for all her past obduracy—now she will not for a moment yield that he could have been ever anything but all that was pure, and beautiful, and good

CHAPTER XII.

But although we are in love, business must not be utterly neglected, and Mr. Dacre insisted that the young Duke should for one morning cease to wander in his park, and listen to the result of his exertions during the last three months. His Grace listened. Rents had not risen, but it was hoped that they had seen their worst; the railroad had been successfully opposed; and coals had improved. The London mansion and the Alhambra had both been disposed of, and well; the first to the new French Ambassador; and the second, to a grey-headed stock-jobber, very rich, who, having no society, determined to make solitude amusing. The proceeds of these sales, together with sundry sums obtained by converting into cash the stud, the furniture, and the *bijouterie*, produced a most respectable fund, which nearly paid off the annoying miscellaneous debts. For the rest, Mr. Dacre, while he agreed that it was on the whole advisable that the buildings should be completed, determined that none of the estates should be sold, or even mortgaged. His plan was to procrastinate the termination of these undertakings, and to allow each year itself to afford the necessary supplies. By annually setting aside one hundred thousand pounds, in seven or eight years he hoped to find everything completed and all debts cleared. He did not think that the extravagance of the Duke could justify any diminution in the sum which had hitherto been apportioned for the maintenance of the Irish establishments; but he was of opinion, that the decreased portion which they, as well as the western estates, now afforded to the total income, was a sufficient reason. Fourteen thousand a-year were consequently allotted to Ireland, and seven to Pen Bronnock. There remained to the Duke about thirty thousand per annum; but then Hauteville was to be kept up with this. Mr. Dacre proposed that the young people should reside at Rosemount, and that consequently they might form their establishment from the Castle, without reducing their Yorkshire appointments, and avail themselves without any obligation, or even the opportunity, of great expenses, of all the advantages afforded by the necessary expenditure. Finally, Mr. Dacre presented his son with his town mansion and furniture; and as the young Duke insisted that the settlements upon her Grace should be prepared in full reference to his inherited and future income, this generous father at once made over to him the great bulk of his personal property, amounting to upwards of a hundred thousand pounds, a little ready money, of which he knew the value.

The Duke of St. James had duly informed his uncle, the Earl of Fitz-pompey, of the intended change in his condition, and in answer received the following letter:—

"Fitz-pompey Hall, May 18—,

"My dear George,

"Your letter did not give us so much surprise as you expected; but, I assure you, it gave us as much pleasure. You have shown your wisdom and your taste in your choice; and I am free to confess, that I am acquainted with no one more worthy of the station which the Duchess of St. James must always fill in society, and more calculated to maintain the dignity of your family, than the lady whom you are about to introduce to us as our niece. Believe me, my dear George, that the notification of this agreeable event has occasioned even additional gratification both to your aunt and to myself, from the reflection that you are about to ally yourself with a family in whose welfare we must ever take an especial interest, and whom we may in a manner look upon as our own relatives. For, my dear George, in answer to your flattering and most pleasing communication, it is my truly agreeable duty to inform you (and, believe me, you are the first person out of our immediate family to whom this intelligence is made known) that our Caroline, in whose happiness we are well assured you take a lively interest, is about to be united to one who may now be described as your near relative, namely, Mr. Arundel Dacre.

"It has been a long attachment, though for a considerable time, I confess, unknown to us; and indeed at first sight, with Caroline's rank and other advantages, it may not appear, in a mere worldly point of view, so desirable a connection as some perhaps might expect. And to be quite confidential, both your aunt and myself were at first a little disinclined—(great as our esteem and regard have ever been for him)—a little disinclined, I say, to the union. But Dacre is certainly the most rising man of the day. In point of family, he is second to none; and his uncle has indeed behaved in the most truly liberal manner. I assure you, he considers him as a son; and even if there were no other inducement, the mere fact of your connection with the family would alone not only reconcile, but, so to say, make us perfectly satisfied with the arrangement. It is unnecessary to speak to you of the antiquity of the Dacres. Arundel will ultimately be one of the richest Commoners, and I think it is not too bold to anticipate, taking into consideration the family into which he marries, and, above all, his connection with you, that we may finally succeed in having him called up to us. You are of course aware that there was once a barony in the family.

"Everybody talks of your speech. I assure you, although I ever gave you credit for uncommon talents, I was astonished. So you are to have the vacant ribbon! Why did you not tell me? I learnt it to-day, from Lord Bobbleshim. But we must not quarrel with men in love for not communicating.

"You ask me for news of all your old friends. You of course saw the death of old Annesley. The new Lord took his seat yesterday; he was introduced by Lord Bloomerly. I was not surprised to hear in the evening that he was about to be married to Lady Charlotte, though the world affect to be astonished. I should not forget to say that Lord Annesley asked most particularly after you. For him, quite warm, I assure you.

"The oddest thing has happened to your friend, Lord Squib. Old Colonel Carlisle is dead, and has left his whole fortune, some say half a million, to the oddest person,—merely because she had the reputation of being his daughter. Quite an odd person,—you understand me,—Mrs. Montfort. St. Maurice says, you know her; but we must not talk of these things now. Well, Squib is going to be married to her. He says that he knows all his old friends will cut him when they are married, and so he is determined to give him an excuse. I understand she is a very fine woman. He talks of living at Rome and Florence for a year or two.

"Lord Darrell is about to marry Harriet Wrekin; and between ourselves,—but don't let this go any further at present,—I have very little doubt that young Pococurante will shortly be united to Isabel. Connected as we are with the Shropshires, these excellent alliances are very gratifying.

"I see very little of Lucius Grafton. He seems ill. I understand, for certain, that her Ladyship opposes the divorce. *On dit*, she has got hold of some letters, through the treachery of her soubrette, whom he supposed quite his creature, and that your friend is rather taken in. But I should not think this true. People talk very loosely. There was a gay party at Mrs. Dallington's the other night, who asked very kindly after you.

"I think I have now written you a very long letter. I once more congratulate you on your *admirable* selection, and with the united remembrance of our circle—particularly Caroline, who will write perhaps by this post to Miss D——, believe me, dear George, your truly affectionate uncle,

"FITZ-POMPEY."

"P.S.—Lord Marylebone is very unpopular—quite a brute. We all miss you."

It is not to be supposed that this letter conveyed the first intimation to the Duke of St. James of the most interesting event of

which it spoke. On the contrary, he had long been aware of the whole affair; but we have been too much engaged with his own conduct, to find time to let the reader into the secret, which, like all secrets, it is to be hoped, was no secret. Next to gaining the affections of May Dacre, it was impossible for any event to occur more delightful to our hero than the present. His heart had often misgiven him when he had thought of Caroline. Now she was happy, and not only happy, but connected with him for life, just as he wished. Arundel Dacre, too, of all men he most wished to like, and indeed most liked. One feeling alone had prevented them from being bosom friends, and that feeling had long triumphantly vanished.

May had been almost from the beginning the confidante of her cousin. In vain, however, had she beseeched him to entrust all to her father. Although he now repented his past feelings, he could not be induced to change; and not till he had entered Parliament and succeeded and gained a name, which would reflect honour on the family with which he wished to identify himself, would he impart to his uncle the secret of his heart, and gain that support without which his great object could never have been achieved. The Duke of St. James, by returning him to Parliament, had been the unconscious cause of all his happiness, and ardently did he pray that his generous friend might succeed in what he was well aware was his secret aspiration, and that his beloved cousin might yield her hand to the only man whom Arundel Dacre considered worthy of her.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANOTHER week brought another letter from the Earl of Fitz-pompey.

THE EARL OF FITZ-POMPEY TO THE DUKE OF ST. JAMES.
[*Read this alone.*]

"MY DEAR GEORGE,

"I beg you will not be alarmed by the above memorandum, which I thought it but prudent to prefix. A very disagreeable affair has just taken place, and to a degree exceedingly alarming; but it might have turned out much more distressing, and, on the whole, we may all congratulate ourselves at the result. Not to keep you in fearful suspense, I beg to recall your recollection to the rumour which I noticed in my last, of the intention of Lady Aphrodite Grafton to oppose the divorce. A few days back, her brother

Lord Waristoun, with whom I was previously unacquainted, called upon me by appointment, having previously requested a private interview. The object of his seeing me was no less than to submit to my inspection the letters, by aid of which it was anticipated that the divorce might be successfully opposed. You will be astounded to hear that these consist of a long series of correspondence of Mrs. Dallington Vere's, developing, I am shocked to say, machinations of a very alarming nature, the effect of which, my dear George, was no less than very materially to control your fortunes in life, and those of that charming and truly admirable lady whom you have delighted us all so much by declaring to be our future relative.

"From the very delicate nature of the disclosures, Lord Wariston felt the great importance of obtaining all necessary results without making them public; and, actuated by these feelings, he applied to me, both as your nearest relative, and an acquaintance of Sir Lucius, and, as he expressed it, and I may be permitted to repeat, as one whose experience in the management of difficult and delicate negotiations was not altogether unknown, in order that I might be put in possession of the facts of the case, advise and perhaps interfere for the common good.

"Under these circumstances, and taking into consideration the extreme difficulty attendant upon a satisfactory arrangement of the affair, I thought fit, in confidence, to apply to Arundel, whose talents I consider of the first order, and only equalled by his prudence and calm temper. As a relation, too, of more than one of the parties concerned, it was perhaps only proper that the correspondence should be submitted to him.

"I am sorry to say, my dear George, that Arundel behaved in a very odd manner, and not at all with that discretion which might have been expected both from one of his remarkably sober and staid disposition, and one not a little experienced in diplomatic life. He exhibited the most unequivocal signs of his displeasure at the conduct of the parties principally concerned, and expressed himself in so vindictive a manner against one of them, that I very much regretted my application, and requested him to be cool.

"He seemed to yield to my solicitations, but, I regret to say, his composure was only feigned, and the next morning he and Sir Lucius Grafton met. Sir Lucius fired first, without effect, but Arundel's aim was more fatal, and his ball was lodged in the thigh of his adversary. Sir Lucius has only been saved by amputation; and I need not remark to you, that to such a man, life on such conditions is scarcely desirable. All idea of a divorce is quite given over. The letters in question were stolen from his

cabinet by his valet, and given to a soubrette of his wife, whom Sir Lucius considered in his interest, but who, as you see, betrayed him.

"For me remained the not very agreeable office of seeing Mrs. Dallington Vere. I made known to her, in a manner as little offensive as possible, the object of my visit. The scene, my dear George, was very trying; and I think it very hard, that the follies of a parcel of young people should really place me in such a distressing position. She fainted, &c., and wished the letters to be given up; but Lord Wariston would not consent to this, though he promised to keep their contents secret, provided she quitted the country. She goes directly; and I am well assured, which is not the least surprising part of this strange history, that her affairs are in a state of great distraction. The relatives of her late husband are about again to try the Will, and with every prospect of success. She has been negotiating with them for some time through the agency of Sir Lucius Grafton, and the late exposé will not favour her interests.

"If anything further happens, my dear George, depend upon my writing; but Arundel desires me to say, that on Saturday he will run down to Dacre for a few days, as he very much wishes to see you and all. With our united remembrance to Mr. and Miss Dacre,

"Ever, my dear George,

"Your very affectionate uncle,

"FITZ-POMPEY."

The young Duke turned with trembling and disgust from these dark terminations of unprincipled careers, and these fatal evidences of the indulgence of unbridled passions. How nearly, too, had he been shipwrecked in this moral whirlpool! With what gratitude did he not invoke the beneficent Providence that had not permitted the innate seeds of human virtue to be blighted in his wild and neglected soul! With what admiration did he not gaze upon the pure and beautiful being whose virtue and whose loveliness were the causes of his regeneration, the sources of his present happiness, and the guarantees of his future joy!

Four years have now elapsed since the young Duke of St. James was united to May Dacre; and it would not be too bold to declare, that during that period he has never for an instant ceased to consider himself the happiest and the most fortunate of men. His life is passed in the agreeable discharge of all the important duties of his exalted station, and his present career is by far a better answer to the lucubrations of young Duncan Macmorrogh, than all the abstract arguments that ever yet were offered in favour of the existence of an Aristocracy.

Hauteville House and Hauteville Castle proceed in regular course. These magnificent dwellings will never erase simple and delightful Rosemount from the grateful memory of the Duchess of St. James. Parliament, and in a degree society, invite the Duke and Duchess each year to the metropolis, and Mr. Dacre is generally their guest. Their most intimate and beloved friends are Arundel and his wife,—and as Lady Caroline now heads the establishment of Castle Dacre, they are seldom separated. But among their most agreeable company is a young gentleman styled by courtesy Dacre, Marquess of Hauteville; and his young sister, who has not yet escaped from her beautiful mother's arms, and who beareth the blooming title of the Lady May.

THE END.

CONINGSBY

PREFACE

TO

THE FIFTH EDITION.

"CONINGSBY" was published in the year 1844. The main purpose of its writer was to vindicate the just claims of the Tory party to be the popular political confederation of the country; a purpose which he had, more or less, pursued from a very early period of life. The occasion was favourable to the attempt. The youthful mind of England had just recovered from the inebriation of the great Conservative triumph of 1841, and was beginning to inquire what, after all, they had conquered to preserve. It was opportune therefore to show that Toryism was not a phrase, but a fact, and that our political institutions were the embodiment of our popular necessities. This the writer endeavoured to do without prejudice, and to treat of events and characters of which he had some personal experience, not altogether without the impartiality of the future.

It was not originally the intention of the writer to adopt the form of fiction as the instrument to scatter his suggestions, but, after reflection, he resolved to avail himself of a method which, in the temper of the times, offered the best chance of influencing opinion.

In considering the Tory scheme, the author recognised in the CHURCH the most powerful agent in the previous development of England, and the most efficient means of that renovation of the national spirit at which he aimed. The Church is a sacred corporation for the promulgation and maintenance in Europe of certain Asian principles, which, although local in their birth, are of divine origin, and of universal and eternal application.

In asserting the paramount character of the ecclesiastical polity and the majesty of the theocratic principle, it became necessary to ascend to the origin of the Christian Church, and to meet in a spirit worthy of a critical and comparatively enlightened age, the position of the descendants of that race who were the founders of Christianity. The modern Jews had long laboured under the odium and stigma of mediæval malevolence. In the

dark ages when history was unknown, the passions of societies, undisturbed by traditionary experience, were strong, and their convictions, unmitigated by criticism, were necessarily fanatical. The Jews were looked upon in the middle ages as an accursed race,—the enemies of God and man,—the especial foes of Christianity. No one in those days paused to reflect that Christianity was founded by the Jews; that its Divine Author, in his human capacity, was a descendant of King David; that his doctrines avowedly were the completion, not the change, of Judaism; that the Apostles and the Evangelists, whose names men daily invoked, and whose volumes they embraced with reverence, were all Jews; that the infallible throne of Rome itself was established by a Jew; and that a Jew was the founder of the Christian Churches of Asia.

The European nations, relatively speaking, were then only recently converted to a belief in Moses and in Christ, and, as it were, still ashamed of the wild deities whom they had deserted, they thought they atoned for their past idolatry by wreaking their vengeance on a race to whom, and to whom alone, they were indebted for the Gospel they adored.

In vindicating the sovereign right of the Church of Christ to be the perpetual regenerator of man, the writer thought the time had arrived when some attempt should be made to do justice to the race which had founded Christianity.

The writer has developed in another work ("Tancred") the views respecting the great house of Israel, which he first intimated in "Coningsby." No one has attempted to refute them, nor is refutation possible; since all he has done is to examine certain facts in the truth of which all agree, and to draw from them irresistible conclusions which prejudice for a moment may shrink from, but which reason cannot refuse to admit.

The success of this work was not questionable. Three considerable editions were sold in this country in three months: it was largely circulated throughout the Continent of Europe, and within a very brief period, more than 50,000 copies were required in the United States of America. In the fifth year of its life, the writer has been called upon to prepare the fifth edition of a work for some time out of print, and which is now offered to the public in a form easy of acquisition to those who may wish to possess it.

D.

Grosvenor Gate,
May, 1849.

CONINGSBY.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

It was a bright May morning some twelve years ago, when a youth of still tender age, for he had certainly not entered his teens by more than two years, was ushered into the waiting-room of a house in the vicinity of St. James's Square, which, though with the general appearance of a private residence, and that too of no very ambitious character, exhibited at this period symptoms of being occupied for some public purpose.

The house-door was constantly open, and frequent guests even at this early hour crossed the threshold. The hall-table was covered with sealed letters; and the hall-porter inscribed in a book the name of every individual who entered.

The young gentleman we have mentioned found himself in a room which offered few resources for his amusement. A large table amply covered with writing materials, and a few chairs, were its sole furniture, except the grey drugget that covered the floor, and a muddy mezzotinto of the Duke of Wellington that adorned its cold walls. There was not even a newspaper; and the only books were the Court Guide and the London Directory. For some time he remained with patient endurance planted against the wall, with his feet resting on the rail of his chair; but at length in his shifting posture he gave evidence of his restlessness, rose from his seat, looked out of the window into a small side court of the house surrounded with dead walls, paced the room, took up the Court Guide, changed it for the London Directory, then wrote his name over several sheets of foolscap paper, drew various landscapes and faces of his friends; and then, splitting up a pen or two, delivered himself of a yawn which seemed the climax of his weariness.

And yet the youth's appearance did not betoken a character that, if the opportunity had offered, could not have found amusement and even instruction. His countenance, radiant with health and

the lustre of innocence, was at the same time thoughtful and resolute. The expression of his deep blue eye was serious. Without extreme regularity of features, the face was one that would never have passed unobserved. His short upper lip indicated a good breed; and his chestnut curls clustered over his open brow, while his shirt-collar thrown over his shoulders was unrestrained by handkerchief or riband. Add to this, a limber and graceful figure, which the jacket of his boyish dress exhibited to great advantage.

Just as the youth, mounted on a chair, was adjusting the portrait of the Duke, which he had observed to be awry, the gentleman for whom he had been all this time waiting entered the room.

"Floreat Etona!" hastily exclaimed the gentleman, in a sharp voice; "you are setting the Duke to rights. I have left you a long time a prisoner; but I found them so busy here, that I made my escape with some difficulty."

He who uttered these words was a man of middle size and age, originally in all probability of a spare habit, but now a little inclined to corpulency. Baldness, perhaps, contributed to the spiritual expression of a brow, which was, however, essentially intellectual, and gave some character of openness to a countenance which, though not ill-favoured, was unhappily stamped by a sinister cast that was not to be mistaken. His manner was easy, but rather audacious than well-bred. Indeed, while a visage which might otherwise be described as handsome was spoilt by a dishonest glance, so a demeanour that was by no means deficient in self-possession and facility, was tainted by an innate vulgarity, which in the long run, though seldom, yet surely developed itself.

The youth had jumped off his chair on the entrance of the gentleman, and then taking up his hat, said—

"Shall we go to grandpapa now, sir?"

"By all means, my dear boy," said the gentleman, putting his arm within that of the youth; and they were just on the point of leaving the waiting-room, when the door was suddenly thrown open, and two individuals, in a state of very great excitement, rushed into the apartment.

"Rigby—Rigby!" they both exclaimed at the same moment. "By G— they're out!"

"Who told you?"

"The best authority; one of themselves."

"Who—who?"

"Paul Evelyn; I met him as I passed Brookes', and he told me that Lord Grey had resigned, and the King had accepted his resignation."

But Mr. Rigby, who, though very fond of news, and much interested in the present, was extremely jealous of any one giving

him information, was sceptical. He declared that Paul Evelyn was always wrong; that it was morally impossible that Paul Evelyn ever could be right; that he knew, from the highest authority, that Lord Grey had been twice yesterday with the King; that on the last visit nothing was settled; that if he had been at the palace again to-day, he could not have been there before twelve o'clock; that it was only now a quarter to one; that Lord Grey would have called his colleagues together on his return; that at least an hour must have elapsed before anything could possibly have transpired. Then he compared and criticised the dates of every rumoured incident of the last twenty-four hours (and nobody was stronger in dates than Mr. Rigby); counted even the number of stairs which the minister had to ascend and descend in his visit to the palace, and the time their mountings and dismountings must have consumed (detail was Mr. Rigby's forte); and finally, what with his dates, his private information, his knowledge of palace localities, his contempt for Paul Evelyn, and his confidence in himself, he succeeded in persuading his downcast and disheartened friends, that their comfortable intelligence had not the slightest foundation.

They all left the room together; they were in the hall; the gentlemen who brought the news looked somewhat depressed, but Mr. Rigby gay, even amid the prostration of his party, from the consciousness that he had most critically demolished a piece of political gossip and conveyed a certain degree of mortification to a couple of his companions; when a travelling carriage and four with a ducal coronet drove up to the house. The door was thrown open, the steps dashed down, and a youthful noble sprang from his chariot into the hall.

"Good morning, Rigby," said the Duke.

"I see your Grace well, I am sure," said Mr. Rigby, with a very softened manner.

"You have heard the news, gentlemen?" he continued.

"What news? Yes—no—that is to say—Mr. Rigby thinks——"

"You know, of course, that Lord Lyndhurst is with the King?"

"It is impossible," said Mr. Rigby.

"I don't think I can be mistaken," said the Duke, smiling.

"I will show your Grace that it is impossible," said Mr. Rigby. "Lord Lyndhurst slept at Wimbledon. Lord Grey could not have seen the King until twelve o'clock; it is now five minutes to one. It is impossible, therefore, that any message from the King could have reached Lord Lyndhurst in time for his Lordship to be at the palace at this moment."

"But my authority is a very high one," said the Duke.

"Authority is a phrase," said Mr. Rigby; "we must look to time and place, dates and localities, to discover the truth."

"Your Grace was saying that your authority——" ventured to observe Mr. Tadpole, emboldened by the presence of a duke, his patron, to struggle against the despotism of a Rigby, his tyrant.

"Was the highest," rejoined the Duke, smiling, "for it was Lord Lyndhurst himself. I came up from Nuneham this morning, passed his Lordship's house in Hyde Park Place as he was getting into his carriage in full dress, stopped my own, and learned in a breath, that the Whigs were out, and that the King had sent for the Chief Baron. So I came on here at once."

"I always thought the country was sound at bottom," exclaimed Mr. Taper, who, under the old system, had sneaked into the Treasury Board.

Tadpole and Taper were great friends. Neither of them ever despaired of the Commonwealth. Even if the Reform Bill were passed, Taper was convinced that the Whigs would never prove men of business; and when his friends confessed among themselves that a Tory Government was for the future impossible, Taper would remark, in a confidential whisper, that for his part he believed before the year was over the Whigs would be turned out by the clerks.

"There is no doubt that there is considerable reaction," said Mr. Tadpole. "The infamous conduct of the Whigs in the Amersham case has opened the public mind more than anything."

"Aldborough was worse," said Mr. Taper.

"Terrible!" said Tadpole. "They said there was no use discussing the Reform Bill in our House. I believe Rigby's great speech on Aldborough has done more towards the reaction than all the violence of the Political Unions put together."

"Let us hope for the best," said the Duke, mildly. "'Tis a bold step on the part of the Sovereign, and I am free to say I could have wished it postponed; but we must support the King like men. What say you, Rigby? You are silent."

"I am thinking how very unfortunate it was that I did not breakfast with Lyndhurst this morning, as I was nearly doing, instead of going down to Eton."

"To Eton! and why to Eton?"

"For the sake of my young friend here, Lord Monmouth's grandson. By the bye, you are kinsmen. Let me present to your Grace—Mr. Coningsby."

CHAPTER II.

THE political agitation which for a year and a half had shaken England to its centre, received, if possible, an increase to its intensity and virulence, when it was known, in the early part of the month of May, 1832, that the Prime Minister had tendered his resignation to the King, which resignation had been graciously accepted.

The amendment carried by the Opposition in the House of Lords on the evening of the 7th of May, that the enfranchising clauses of the Reform Bill should be considered before entering into the question of disfranchisement, was the immediate cause of this startling event. The Lords had previously consented to the second reading of the Bill with the view of preventing that large increase of their numbers with which they had been long menaced; rather, indeed, by mysterious rumours than by any official declaration; but, nevertheless, in a manner which had carried conviction to no inconsiderable portion of the Opposition that the threat was not without foundation.

During the progress of the Bill through the Lower House, the journals which were looked upon as the organs of the ministry had announced with unhesitating confidence, that Lord Grey was armed with what was then called a "carte blanche" to create any number of peers necessary to insure its success. But public journalists who were under the control of the ministry, and whose statements were never contradicted, were not the sole authorities for this prevailing belief. Members of the House of Commons, who were strong supporters of the cabinet, though not connected with it by any official tie, had unequivocally stated in their places that the Sovereign had not resisted the advice of his counsellors to create peers, if such creation were required to carry into effect what was then styled "the great national measure." In more than one instance, ministers had been warned, that if they did not exercise that power with prompt energy, they might deserve impeachment. And these intimations and announcements had been made in the presence of leading members of the Government, and had received from them, at least, the sanction of their silence.

It did not subsequently appear that the Reform ministers had been invested with any such power; but a conviction of the reverse, fostered by these circumstances, had successfully acted upon the nervous temperament, or the statesman-like prudence, of a certain section of the peers, who consequently hesitated in their course—were known as being no longer inclined to pursue their policy of the preceding session—had thus obtained a title

at that moment in everybody's mouth—the title of "THE WAVERERS."

Notwithstanding, therefore, the opposition of the Duke of Wellington and of Lord Lyndhurst, the Waverers carried the second reading of the Reform Bill; and then, scared at the consequences of their own headstrong timidity, they went in a flight to the Duke and his able adviser to extricate them from the inevitable result of their own conduct. The ultimate device of these distracted counsels, where daring and poltroonery, principle and expediency, public spirit and private intrigue, each threw an ingredient into the turbulent spell, was the celebrated and successful amendment to which we have referred.

But the Whig ministers, who, whatever may have been their faults, were at least men of intellect and courage, were not to be beaten by "the Waverers." They might have made terms with an audacious foe; they trampled on a hesitating opponent. Lord Grey hastened to the palace.

Before the result of this appeal to the Sovereign was known, for its effects were not immediate, on the second morning after the vote in the House of Lords, Mr. Rigby had made that visit to Eton which had summoned very unexpectedly the youthful Coningsby to London. He was the orphan child of the youngest of the two sons of the Marquess of Monmouth. It was a family famous for its hatreds. The eldest son hated his father; and, it was said, in spite had married a lady to whom that father was attached, and with whom Lord Monmouth then meditated a second alliance. This eldest son lived at Naples, and had several children, but maintained no connection either with his parent or his native country. On the other hand, Lord Monmouth hated his younger son, who had married, against his consent, a woman to whom that son was devoted. A system of domestic persecution, sustained by the hand of a master, had eventually broken up the health of its victim, who died of a fever in a foreign country, where he had sought some refuge from his creditors.

His widow returned to England with her child; and, not having a relation, and scarcely an acquaintance, in the world, made an appeal to her husband's father, the wealthiest noble in England, and a man who was often prodigal, and occasionally generous. After some time, and more trouble, after urgent and repeated, and what would have seemed heart-rending, solicitations, the attorney of Lord Monmouth called upon the widow of his client's son, and informed her of his Lordship's decision. Provided she gave up her child, and permanently resided in one of the remotest counties, he was authorised to make her, in four quarterly payments, the yearly allowance of three hundred

pounds, that being the income that Lord Monmouth, who was the shrewdest accountant in the country, had calculated a lone woman might very decently exist upon in a small market town in the county of Westmoreland.

Desperate necessity, the sense of her own forlornness, the utter impossibility to struggle with an omnipotent foe, who, her husband had taught her, was above all scruples, prejudices, and fears, and who, though he respected law, despised opinion, made the victim yield. But her sufferings were not long; the separation from her child, the bleak clime, the strange faces around her, sharp memory, and the dull routine of an unimpassioned life, all combined to wear out a constitution originally frail, and since shattered by many sorrows. Mrs. Coningsby died the same day that her father-in-law was made a Marquess. He deserved his honours. The four votes he had inherited in the House of Commons had been increased, by his intense volition and unsparing means, to ten; and the very day he was raised to his Marquisate, he commenced sapping fresh corporations, and was working for the strawberry leaf. His honours were proclaimed in the London Gazette, and her decease was not even noticed in the County Chronicle; but the altars of Nemesis are beneath every outraged roof, and the death of this unhappy lady, apparently without an earthly friend or an earthly hope, desolate and deserted, and dying in obscure poverty, was not forgotten.

Coningsby was not more than nine years of age when he lost his last parent; and he had then been separated from her for nearly three years. But he remembered the sweetness of his nursery days. His mother, too, had written to him very frequently since he quitted her, and her fond expressions had cherished the tenderness of his heart. He wept very bitterly when his schoolmaster broke to him the news of his mother's death. True it was they had been long parted, and their prospect of again meeting was vague and dim; but his mother seemed to him his only link to human society. It was something to have a mother, even if he never saw her. Other boys went to see their mothers! he, at least, could talk of his. Now he was alone. His grandfather was to him only a name. Lord Monmouth resided almost constantly abroad, and during his rare visits to England had found no time or inclination to see the orphan with whom he felt no sympathy. Even the death of the boy's mother, and the consequent arrangements, were notified to his master by a stranger. The letter which brought the sad intelligence was from Mr. Rigby. It was the first time that name had been known to Coningsby.

Mr. Rigby was a member for one of Lord Monmouth's boroughs. He was the manager of Lord Monmouth's parliamen-

tary influence, and the auditor of his vast estates. He was more; he was Lord Monmouth's companion when in England, his correspondent when abroad—hardly his counsellor, for Lord Monmouth never required advice; but Mr. Rigby could instruct him in matters of detail, which Mr. Rigby made amusing. Rigby was not a professional man; indeed, his origin, education, early pursuits, and studies, were equally obscure; but he had contrived in good time to squeeze himself into parliament, by means which no one could ever comprehend, and then set up to be a perfect man of business. The world took him at his word, for he was bold, acute, and voluble; with no thought, but a good deal of desultory information; and though destitute of all imagination and noble sentiment, was blessed with a vigorous, mendacious fancy, fruitful in small expedients, and never happier than when devising shifts for great men's scrapes.

They say that all of us have one chance in this life, and so it was with Rigby. After a struggle of many years, after a long series of the usual alternatives of small successes and small failures, after a few cleverish speeches and a good many cleverish pamphlets, with a considerable reputation, indeed, for pasquinades, most of which he never wrote, and articles in reviews to which it was whispered he had contributed, Rigby, who had already intrigued himself into a subordinate office, met with Lord Monmouth.

He was just the animal that Lord Monmouth wanted, for Lord Monmouth always looked upon human nature with the callous eye of a jockey. He surveyed Rigby, and he determined to buy him. He bought him; with his clear head, his indefatigable industry, his audacious tongue, and his ready and unscrupulous pen; with all his dates, all his lampoons; all his private memoirs, and all his political intrigues. It was a good purchase. Rigby became a great personage, and Lord Monmouth's man.

Mr. Rigby, who liked to be doing a great many things at the same time, and to astonish the Tadpoles and Tapers with his energetic versatility, determined to superintend the education of Coningsby. It was a relation which identified him with the noble house of his pupil, or, properly speaking, his charge: for Mr. Rigby affected rather the graceful dignity of the governor than the duties of a tutor. The boy was recalled from his homely, rural school, where he had been well grounded by a hard-working curate, and affectionately tended by the curate's unsophisticated wife. He was sent to a fashionable school preparatory to Eton, where he found about two hundred youths of noble families and connections, lodged in a magnificent villa that had once been the retreat of a minister, superintended by a sycophantic Doctor of

Divinity, already well beneficed, and not despairing of a bishopric by favouring the children of the great nobles. The doctor's lady, clothed in cashmeres, sometimes inquired after their health, and occasionally received a report as to their linen.

Mr. Rigby had a classical retreat, not distant from this establishment, which he esteemed a Tusculum. There, surrounded by his busts and books, he wrote his lampoons and articles; massacred a she liberal (it was thought that no one could lash a woman like Rigby), cut up a rising genius whose politics were different from his own, or scarified some unhappy wretch who had brought his claims before parliament, proving, by garbled extracts from official correspondence that no one could refer to, that the malcontent instead of being a victim, was, on the contrary, a defaulter. Tadpole and Taper would back Rigby for a "slashing reply" against the field. Here, too, at the end of a busy week, he found it occasionally convenient to entertain a clever friend or two of equivocal reputation, with whom he had become acquainted in former days of equal brotherhood. No one was more faithful to his early friends than Mr. Rigby, particularly if they could write a squib.

It was in this refined retirement that Mr. Rigby found time enough, snatched from the toils of official life and parliamentary struggles, to compose a letter on the study of History, addressed to Coningsby. The style was as much like that of Lord Bolingbroke as if it had been written by the authors of the "Rejected Addresses," and it began, "My dear young friend." This polished composition, so full of good feeling and comprehensive views, and all in the best taste, was not published. It was only privately printed, and a few thousand copies were distributed among select personages as an especial favour and mark of high consideration. Each copy given away seemed to Rigby like a certificate of character—a property which, like all men of dubious repute, he thoroughly appreciated. Rigby intrigued very much that the head master of Eton should adopt his discourse as a class-book. For this purpose he dined with the Doctor, told him several anecdotes of the King, which intimated personal influence at Windsor; but the head master was inflexible, and so Mr. Rigby was obliged to be content with having his Letter on History canonized as a classic in the Preparatory Seminary, where the individual to whom it was addressed was a scholar.

This change in the life of Coningsby contributed to his happiness. The various characters which a large school exhibited interested a young mind whose active energies were beginning to stir. His previous acquirements made his studies light; and he was fond of sports, in which he was qualified to excel. He did not particularly like Mr. Rigby. There was something jarring

and grating in that gentleman's voice and modes, from which the chords of the young heart shrank. He was not tender; though perhaps he wished it, scarcely kind: but he was good-natured, at least to children. However, this connection was on the whole a very agreeable one for Coningsby. He seemed suddenly to have friends; he never passed his holydays again at school. Mr. Rigby was so clever that he contrived always to quarter Coningsby on the father of one of his school-fellows, for Mr. Rigby knew all his school-fellows and all their fathers. Mr. Rigby also called to see him, not unfrequently would give him a dinner at the Star and Garter, or even have him up to town for a week to Whitehall. Compared with his former forlorn existence, these were happy days, when he was placed under the gallery as a member's son, or went to the play with the butler!

When Coningsby had attained his twelfth year, an order was received from Lord Monmouth, who was at Rome, that he should go at once to Eton. This was the first great epoch of his life. There never was a youth who entered into that wonderful little world with more eager zest than Coningsby. Nor was it marvellous.

That delicious plain, studded with every creation of graceful culture; hamlet and hall, and grange; garden and grove, and park; that castle-palace, grey with glorious ages; those antique spires, hoar with faith and wisdom, the chapel and the college; that river winding through the shady meads; the sunny glade and the solemn avenue; the room in the Dame's house where we first order our own breakfast and first feel we are free; the stirring multitude, the energetic groups, the individual mind that leads, conquers, controls; the emulation and the affection; the noble strife and the tender sentiment; the daring exploit and the dashing scrape; the passion that pervades our life, and breathes in everything, from the aspiring study to the inspiring sport—oh! what hereafter can spur the brain and touch the heart like this; can give us a world so deeply and variously interesting; a life so full of quick and bright excitement—passed in a scene so fair?

CHAPTER III.

Lord Monmouth, who detested popular tumults as much as he despised public opinion, had remained during the agitating year of 1831 in his luxurious retirement in Italy, contenting himself with opposing the Reform Bill by proxy. But when his correspondent, Mr. Rigby, had informed him, in the early part of the spring of 1832, of the probability of a change in the tactics of the Tory party,

and that an opinion was becoming prevalent among their friends, that the great scheme must be defeated in detail rather than again withstood on principle, his Lordship, who was never wanting in energy when his own interests were concerned, immediately crossed the Alps, and travelled rapidly to England. He indulged a hope that the weight of his presence and the influence of his strong character, which was at once shrewd and courageous, might induce his friends to relinquish their half measure, a course to which his nature was very repugnant. At all events, if they persisted in their intention, and the Bill went into committee, his presence was indispensable, for in that stage of a parliamentary proceeding proxies become ineffective.

The counsels of Lord Monmouth, though they coincided with those of the Duke of Wellington, did not prevail with the Waverers. Several of these high-minded personages had had their windows broken, and they were not of opinion that a man who lived at Naples was a competent judge of the state of public feeling in England. Besides, the days are gone by for senates to have their beards plucked in the forum. We live in an age of prudence. The leaders of the people, now, generally follow. The truth is, the peers were in a fright. 'Twas a pity; there is scarcely a less dignified entity than a patrician in a panic.

Among the most intimate companions of Coningsby at Eton, was Lord Henry Sydney, his kinsman. Coningsby had frequently passed his holydays of late at Beaumanoir, the seat of the Duke, Lord Henry's father. The Duke sat next to Lord Monmouth during the debate on the enfranchising question, and to wile away the time, and from kindness of disposition, spoke, and spoke with warmth and favour, of his grandson. The polished Lord Monmouth bowed as if he were much gratified by this notice of one so dear to him. He had too much tact to admit that he had never yet seen his grandchild; but he asked some questions as to his progress and pursuits, his tastes and habits, which intimated the interest of an affectionate relative.

Nothing, however, was ever lost upon Lord Monmouth. No one had a more retentive memory, or a more observant mind. And the next day, when he received Mr. Rigby at his morning levee, (Lord Monmouth performed this ceremony in the high style of the old court, and welcomed his visitors in bed,) he said with imperturbable calmness, and as if he had been talking of trying a new horse, "Rigby, I should like to see the boy at Eton."

There might be some objection to grant leave to Coningsby at this moment; but it was a rule with Mr. Rigby never to make difficulties, or at least to persuade his patron that he, and he only, could remove them. He immediately undertook that the boy

should be forthcoming, and, notwithstanding the excitement of the moment, he went off next morning to fetch him.

They arrived in town rather early; and Rigby, wishing to know how affairs were going on, ordered the servant to drive immediately to the head-quarters of the party; where a permanent committee watched every phasis of the impending revolution; and where every member of the Opposition, of note and trust, was instantly admitted to receive or to impart intelligence.

It was certainly not without emotion that Coningsby contemplated his first interview with his grandfather. All his experience of the ties of relationship, however limited, was full of tenderness and rapture. His memory often dwelt on his mother's sweet embrace; and ever and anon a fitful phantom of some past passage of domestic love haunted his gushing heart. The image of his father was less fresh in his mind; but still it was associated with a vague sentiment of kindness and joy; and the allusions to her husband in his mother's letters had cherished these impressions. To notice lesser sources of influence in his estimate of the domestic tie, he had witnessed under the roof of Beaumanoir the existence of a family bound together by the most beautiful affections. He could not forget how Henry Sydney was embraced by his sisters when he returned home; what frank and fraternal love existed between his kinsman and his elder brother; how affectionately the kind Duke had welcomed his son once more to the house where they had both been born; and the dim eyes, and saddened brows, and tones of tenderness, which rather looked than said farewell, when they went back to Eton.

And these rapturous meetings and these mournful adieus were occasioned only by a separation at the most of a few months, softened by constant correspondence and the communication of mutual sympathy. But Coningsby was to meet a relation, his near, almost his only, relation, for the first time; the relation, too, to whom he owed maintenance, education—it might be said, existence. It was a great incident for a great drama; something tragical in the depth and stir of its emotions. Even the imagination of the boy could not be insensible to its materials; and Coningsby was picturing to himself a beneficent and venerable gentleman pressing to his breast an agitated youth, when his reverie was broken by the carriage stopping before the gates of Monmouth House.

The gates were opened by a gigantic Swiss, and the carriage rolled into a huge court-yard. At its end, Coningsby beheld a Palladian palace, with wings and colonnades encircling the court.

A double flight of steps led into a circular and marble hall, adorned with colossal busts of the Cæsars; the staircase in fresco

by Sir James Thornhill, breathed with the loves and wars of gods and heroes. It led into a vestibule, painted in arabesque, hung with Venetian girandoles, and looking into gardens. Opening a door in this chamber, and proceeding some little way down a corridor, Mr. Rigby and his companion arrived at the base of a private staircase. Ascending a few steps, they reached a landing-place, hung with tapestry. Drawing this aside, Mr. Rigby opened a door, and ushered Coningsby through an ante-chamber into a small saloon, of beautiful proportions, and furnished in a brilliant and delicate taste.

"You will find more to amuse you here than where you were before," said Mr. Rigby, "and I shall not be nearly so long absent." So saying, he entered into an inner apartment.

The walls of the saloon, which were covered with light blue satin, held, in silver panels, portraits of beautiful women, painted by Boucher. Couches and easy chairs of every shape invited in every quarter to luxurious repose; while amusement was afforded by tables covered with caricatures, French novels, and endless miniatures of foreign dancers, princesses, and sovereigns.

But Coningsby was so impressed with the impending interview with his grandfather, that he neither sought nor required diversion. Now that the crisis was at hand, he felt agitated and nervous, and wished that he was again at Eton. The suspense was sickening, yet he dreaded still more the summons. He was not long alone; the door opened—he started—grew pale—he thought it was his grandfather; it was not even Mr. Rigby. It was Lord Monmouth's valet.

"Monsieur Konigby?"

"My name is Coningsby," said the boy.

"Milor is ready to receive you," said the valet.

Coningsby sprang forward with that desperation which the scaffold requires. His face was pale; his hand was moist; his heart beat with tumult. He had occasionally been summoned by Dr. Keate; that, too, was awful work, but compared with the present, a morning visit. Music, artillery, the roar of cannon, and the blare of trumpets, may urge a man on to a forlorn hope; ambition, one's constituents, the hell of previous failure, may prevail on us to do a more desperate thing—speak in the House of Commons; but there are some situations in life, (such, for instance, as entering the room of a dentist,) in which the prostration of the nervous system is absolute.

The moment had at length arrived when the desolate was to find a benefactor, the forlorn a friend, the orphan a parent; when the youth, after a childhood of adversity, was to be formally received into the bosom of the noble house from which he had been so long

estranged, and at length to assume that social position to which his lineage entitled him. Manliness might support, affection might soothe, the happy anguish of such a meeting; but it was undoubtedly one of those situations which stir up the deep fountains of our nature, and before which the conventional proprieties of our ordinary manners instantaneously vanish.

Coningsby with an uncertain step followed his guide through a bed-chamber, the sumptuousness of which he could not notice, into the dressing-room of Lord Monmouth. Mr. Rigby, facing Coningsby as he entered, was leaning over the back of a large chair, from which, as Coningsby was announced by the valet, the Lord of the house slowly rose (for he was suffering slightly from the gout), his left hand resting on an ivory stick. Lord Monmouth was in height above the middle size, but somewhat portly and corpulent. His countenance was strongly marked; sagacity on the brow, sensuality in the mouth and jaw. His head was bald, but there were remains of the rich brown locks on which he once prided himself. His large deep blue eye, madid and yet piercing, showed that the secretions of his brain were apportioned, half to voluptuousness, half to common sense. But his general mien was truly grand; full of a natural nobility, of which no one was more sensible than himself. Lord Monmouth was not in dishabille; on the contrary, his costume was exact, and even careful. Rising as we have mentioned when his grandson entered, and leaning with his left hand on his ivory cane, he made Coningsby such a bow as Louis Quatorze might have bestowed on the ambassador of the United Provinces. Then extending his right hand, which the boy tremblingly touched, Lord Monmouth said:

"How do you like Eton?"

This contrast to the reception which he had imagined, hoped, feared, paralysed the reviving energies of young Coningsby. He felt stupified; he looked almost aghast. In the chaotic tumult of his mind, his memory suddenly seemed to receive some miraculous inspiration. Mysterious phrases heard in his earliest boyhood, unnoticed then, long since forgotten, rose to his ear. Who was this grandfather, seen not before, seen now for the first time? Where was the interrening link of blood between him and this superb and icy being? The boy sank into the chair which had been placed for him, and leaning on the table burst into tears.

Here was a business! If there were one thing which would have made Lord Monmouth travel from London to Naples at four and twenty hours' notice, it was to avoid a scene. He hated scenes. He hated feelings. He saw instantly the mistake he had made in sending for his grandchild. He was afraid that Coningsby

was tender-hearted like his father. Another tender-hearted Coningsby! Unfortunate family! Degenerate race! He decided in his mind that Coningsby must be provided for in the Church, and looked at Mr. Rigby, whose principal business it always was to disembarrass his patron from the disagreeable.

Mr. Rigby instantly came forward and adroitly led the boy into the adjoining apartment, Lord Monmouth's bedchamber, closing the door of the dressing-room behind him.

"My dear young friend," said Mr. Rigby, "what is all this?"

A sob the only answer.

"What can be the matter?" said Mr. Rigby.

"I was thinking," said Coningsby, "of poor mamma!"

"Hush!" said Mr. Rigby, "Lord Monmouth never likes to hear of people who are dead; so you must take care never to mention your mother or your father."

In the meantime Lord Monmouth had decided on the fate of Coningsby. The Marquess thought he could read characters by a glance, and in general he was very successful, for his natural sagacity had been nurtured by great experience. His grandson was not to his taste; amiable, no doubt, but a spooney.

We are too apt to believe that the character of a boy is easily read. 'Tis a mystery the most profound. Mark what blunders parents constantly make as to the nature of their own offspring, bred, too, under their eyes, and displaying every hour their characteristics. How often in the nursery does the genius count as a dunce because he is pensive; while a rattling urchin is invested with almost supernatural qualities because his animal spirits make him impudent and flippant! The school-boy, above all others, is not the simple being the world imagines. In that young bosom are often stirring passions as strong as our own, desires not less violent, a volition not less supreme. In that young bosom what burning love, what intense ambition, what avarice, what lust of power; envy that fiends might emulate, hate that man might fear!

CHAPTER IV.

"COME," said Mr. Rigby, when Coningsby was somewhat composed, "come with me, and we will see the house."

So they descended once more the private staircase, and again entered the vestibule.

"If you had seen these gardens when they were illuminated for a fête to George IV.," said Rigby, as crossing the chamber he ushered his charge into the state apartments. The splendour and variety of the surrounding objects soon distracted the attention of

the boy, for the first time in the palace of his fathers. He traversed saloon after saloon hung with rare tapestry and the gorgeous products of foreign looms; filled with choice pictures and creations of curious art; cabinets that sovereigns might envy, and colossal vases of malachite presented by emperors. Coningsby alternately gazed up to ceilings glowing with colour and with gold, and down upon carpets bright with the fancies and vivid with the tints of Aubusson and of Axminster.

"This grandfather of mine is a great prince," thought Coningsby, as musing he stood before a portrait in which he recognised the features of the being from whom he had so recently and so strangely parted. There he stood, Philip Augustus, Marquess of Monmouth, in his robes of estate, with his new coronet on a table near him, a despatch lying at hand that indicated the special mission of high ceremony of which he had been the illustrious envoy, and the garter beneath his knee.

"You will have plenty of opportunities to look at the pictures," said Rigby, observing that the boy had now quite recovered himself. "Some luncheon will do you no harm after our drive;" and he opened the door of another apartment.

It was a pretty room adorned with a fine picture of the chase; at a round table in the centre sat two ladies interested in the meal to which Rigby had alluded.

"Ah, Mr. Rigby!" said the eldest, yet young and beautiful, and speaking, though with fluency, in a foreign accent, "come and tell me some news. Have you seen Milor?" and then she threw a scrutinizing glance from a dark flashing eye at his companion.

"Let me present to your Highness," said Rigby, with an air of some ceremony, "Mr. Coningsby."

"My dear young friend," said the lady, extending her white hand with an air of joyous welcome, "this is Lucretia, my daughter. We love you already. Lord Monmouth will be so charmed to see you. What beautiful eyes he has, Mr. Rigby! Quite like Milor."

The young lady, who was really more youthful than Coningsby, but of a form and stature so developed, that she appeared almost a woman, bowed to the guest with some ceremony, and a faint, sullen smile, and then proceeded with her chicken-pie.

"You must be so hungry after your drive," said the elder lady, placing Coningsby at her side, and herself filling his plate.

This was true enough; and while Mr. Rigby and the lady talked an infinite deal about things which he did not understand, and persons of whom he had never heard, our little hero made his first meal in his paternal house with no ordinary zest; and renovated by the pasty and a glass of sherry, felt altogether a

very different being to what he was, when he had undergone the terrible interview in which he began to reflect he had considerably exposed himself. His courage revived, his senses rallied, he replied to the interrogations of the lady with calmness, but with promptness and propriety. It was evident that he had made a favourable impression on her Highness, for ever and anon she put a truffle or some small delicacy in his plate, and insisted upon his taking some particular confectionary, because it was a favourite of her own. When she rose, she said,—

"In ten minutes the carriage will be at the door; and if you like, my dear young friend, you shall be our beau."

"There is nothing I should like so much," said Coningsby.

"Ah!" said the lady, with the sweetest smile, "he is frank."

The ladies bowed and retired; Mr. Rigby returned to the Marquess, and the groom of the chambers led Coningsby to his room.

This lady, so courteous to Coningsby, was the Princess Colonna, a Roman dame, the second wife of Prince Paul Colonna. The Prince had first married when a boy, and into a family not inferior to his own. Of this union, in every respect unhappy, the Princess Lucretia was the sole offspring. He was a man dissolute and devoted to play; and cared for nothing much but his pleasures and billiards, in which latter he was esteemed unrivalled. According to some, in a freak of passion, according to others, to cancel a gambling debt, he had united himself to his present wife, whose origin was obscure; but with whom he contrived to live on terms of apparent cordiality, for she was much admired, and made the society of her husband sought by those who contributed to his enjoyment. Among these especially figured the Marquess of Monmouth, between whom and Prince Colonna the world recognised as existing the most intimate and entire friendship, so that his Highness and his family were frequent guests under the roof of the English nobleman, and now accompanied him on a visit to England.

CHAPTER V.

In the meantime, while ladies are luncheoning on chicken-pie, or coursing in whirling britskas, performing all the singular ceremonies of a London morning in the heart of the season; making visits where nobody is seen, and making purchases which are not wanted; the world is in agitation and uproar. At present the world and the confusion are limited to St. James's Street and Pall Mall; but soon the boundaries and the tumult will be extended to the intended metropolitan boroughs; to-morrow they will spread over the manufacturing districts. It is perfectly evident, that before

eight-and-forty hours have passed, the country will be in a state of fearful crisis. And how can it be otherwise? Is it not a truth that the subtle Chief Baron has been closeted one whole hour with the King; that shortly after, with thoughtful brow and compressed lip, he was marked in his daring chariot entering the court-yard of Apsley House? Great was the panic at Brookes', wild the hopes of Carlton Terrace; all the gentlemen who expected to have been made peers perceived that the country was going to be given over to a rapacious oligarchy.

In the meantime Tadpole and Taper, who had never quitted for an instant the mysterious head-quarters of the late Opposition, were full of hopes and fears, and asked many questions, which they chiefly answered themselves.

"I wonder what Lord Lyndhurst will say to the King," said Taper.

"He has plenty of pluck," said Tadpole.

"I almost wish now that Rigby had breakfasted with him this morning," said Taper.

"If the King be firm, and the country sound," said Tadpole, "and Lord Monmouth keep his boroughs, I should not wonder to see Rigby made a privy councillor."

"There is no precedent for an under-secretary being a privy councillor," said Taper.

"But we live in revolutionary times," said Tadpole.

"Gentlemen," said the groom of the chambers, in a loud voice, entering the room, "I am desired to state that the Duke of Wellington is with the King."

"There *is* a Providence!" exclaimed an agitated gentleman, the patent of whose intended peerage had not been signed the day that the Duke had quitted office in 1830.

"I always thought the King would be firm," said Mr. Tadpole.

"I wonder who will have the India Board," said Taper.

At this moment three or four gentlemen entered the room in a state of great bustle and excitement; they were immediately surrounded.

"Is it true?" "Quite true; not the slightest doubt. Saw him myself. Not at all hissed; certainly not hooted. Perhaps a little hissed. One fellow really cheered him. Saw him myself. Say what they like, there *is* reaction. But Constitution Hill, they say? Well, there was a sort of inclination to a row on Constitution Hill; but the Duke quite firm; pistols, and carriage doors bolted."

Such may give a faint idea of the anxious inquiries and the satisfactory replies that were occasioned by the entrance of this group.

"Up, guards, and at them!" exclaimed Tadpole, rubbing his hands in a fit of patriotic enthusiasm.

Later in the afternoon, about five o'clock, the high change of political gossip, when the room was crowded, and every one had his rumour, Mr. Rigby looked in again to throw his eye over the evening papers, and catch in various chit-chat the tone of public or party feeling on the "crisis." Then it was known that the Duke had returned from the King, having accepted the charge of forming an administration. An administration to do what? Portentous question! Were concessions to be made? And if so, what? Was it altogether impossible, and too late, "stare super vias antiquas?" Questions altogether above your Tadpoles and your Tapers, whose idea of the necessities of the age was that they themselves should be in office.

Lord Eskdale came up to Mr. Rigby. This peer was a noble Crœsus, acquainted with all the gradations of life; a voluptuary who could be a Spartan; clear-sighted, unprejudiced, sagacious; the best judge in the world of a horse or a man; he was the universal referee; a quarrel about a bet or a mistress was solved by him in a moment, and in a manner which satisfied both parties. He patronised and appreciated the fine arts, though a jockey; respected literary men, though he only read French novels; and without any affectation of tastes which he did not possess, was looked upon by every singer and dancer in Europe, as their natural champion. The secret of his strong character and great influence was his self-composure, which an earthquake or a Reform Bill could not disturb, and which in him was the result of temperament and experience. He was an intimate acquaintance of Lord Monmouth, for they had many tastes in common; were both men of considerable, and in some degree similar, abilities; and were the two greatest proprietors of close boroughs in the country.

"Do you dine at Monmouth House to-day?" inquired Lord Eskdale of Mr. Rigby.

"Where I hope to meet your Lordship. The Whig papers are very subdued," continued Mr. Rigby.

"Ah! they have not the cue yet," said Lord Eskdale.

"And what do you think of affairs?" inquired his companion.

"I think the hounds are too hot to hark off now," said Lord Eskdale.

"There is one combination," said Rigby, who seemed meditating an attack on Lord Eskdale's button.

"Give it us at dinner," said Lord Eskdale, who knew his man, and made an adroit movement forwards as if he were very anxious to see the "Globe" newspaper.

In the course of two or three hours these gentlemen met again in the green drawing-room of Monmouth House. Mr. Rigby was sitting on the sofa by Lord Monmouth, detailing in whispers all

his gossip of the morn: Lord Eskdale murmuring quaint inquiries into the ear of the Princess Lucretia. Madame Colonna made remarks alternately to two gentlemen, who paid her assiduous court. One of these was Mr. Ormsby; the school, the college, and the club crony of Lord Monmouth, who had been his shadow through life; travelled with him in early days, won money with him at play, had been his colleague in the House of Commons; and was still one of his nominees. Mr. Ormsby was a millionnaire, which Lord Monmouth liked. He liked his companions to be very rich or very poor; to be his equals, able to play with him at high stakes, or join him in a great speculation; or to be his tools, and to amuse and serve him. There was nothing which he despised and disliked so much as a moderate fortune.

The other gentleman was of a different class and character. Nature had intended Lucian Gay for a scholar and a wit; necessity had made him a scribbler and a buffoon. He had distinguished himself at the University; but he had no patrimony, nor those powers of perseverance which success in any learned profession requires. He was good-looking, had great animal spirits, and a keen sense of enjoyment, and could not drudge. Moreover he had a fine voice, and sang his own songs with considerable taste; accomplishments which made his fortune in society and completed his ruin. In due time he extricated himself from the bench and merged into journalism, by means of which he chanced to become acquainted with Mr. Rigby. That worthy individual was not slow in detecting the treasure he had lighted on—a wit, a ready and happy writer, a joyous and tractable being, with the education, and still the feelings and manners, of a gentleman. Frequent were the Sunday dinners which found Gay a guest at Mr. Rigby's villa; numerous the airy pasquinades which he left behind, and which made the fortune of his patron. Flattered by the familiar acquaintance of a man of station, and sanguine that he had found the link which would sooner or later restore him to the polished world that he had forfeited, Gay laboured in his vocation with enthusiasm and success. Willingly would Rigby have kept his treasure to himself; and truly he hoarded it for a long time; but it oozed out. Rigby loved the reputation of possessing the complete art of society. His dinners were celebrated at least for their guests. Great intellectual illustrations were found there blended with rank and high station. Rigby loved to patronise; to play the minister unbending and seeking relief from the cares of council in the society of authors, artists, and men of science. He liked Dukes to dine with him and hear him scatter his audacious criticisms to Sir Thomas or Sir Humphry. They went away astounded by the powers of their host, who, had he not fortunately devoted those

powers to their party, must apparently have rivalled Vandyke or discovered the Safety-lamp.

Now in these dinners, Lucian Gay, who had brilliant conversational powers, and who possessed all the resources of boon companionship, would be an invaluable ally. He was therefore admitted, and inspired both by the present enjoyment, and the future to which it might lead, his exertions were untiring, various, most successful. Rigby's dinners became still more celebrated. It, however, necessarily followed that the guests who were charmed by Gay, wished Gay also to be their guest. Rigby was very jealous of this, but it was inevitable; still by constant manœuvre, by intimations of some exercise, some day or other, of substantial patronage in his behalf, by a thousand little arts by which he carved out work for Gay which often prevented him accepting invitations to great houses in the country, by judicious loans of small sums on Lucian's notes of hand and other analogous devices, Rigby contrived to keep the wit in a very fair state of bondage and dependence.

One thing Rigby was resolved on: Gay should never get into Monmouth House. That was an empyreau too high for his wing to soar in. Rigby kept that social monopoly distinctively to mark the relation that subsisted between them as patron and client. It was something to swagger about when they were together after their second bottle of claret. Rigby kept his resolution for some years, which the frequent and prolonged absence of the Marquess rendered not very difficult. But we are the creatures of circumstances; at least the Rigby race particularly. Lord Monmouth returned to England one year, and wanted to be amused. He wanted a jester; a man about him who would make him—not laugh, for that was impossible, but smile more frequently, tell good stories, say good things, and sing now and then, especially French songs. Early in life Rigby would have attempted all this, though he had neither fun, voice, nor ear. But his hold on Lord Monmouth no longer depended on the mere exercise of agreeable qualities, he had become indispensable to his Lordship, by more serious if not higher considerations. And what with auditing his accounts, guarding his boroughs, writing him, when absent, gossip by every post, and when in England deciding on every question and arranging every matter which might otherwise have ruffled the sublime repose of his patron's existence, Rigby might be excused if he shrank a little from the minor part of table wit, particularly when we remember all his subterranean journalism, his acid squibs, and his malicious paragraphs, and, what Tadpole called, his "slashing articles."

These "slashing articles" were, indeed, things which, had they

appeared as anonymous pamphlets, would have obtained the contemptuous reception which in an intellectual view no compositions more surely deserved; but whispered as the productions of one behind the scenes, and appearing in the pages of a party review, they were passed off as genuine coin, and took in great numbers of the lieges, especially in the country. They were written in a style apparently modelled on the briefs of those sharp attorneys who weary advocates with their clever common-place; teasing with obvious comment, and torturing with inevitable inference. The affectation of order in the statement of facts had all the lucid method of an adroit pettifogger. They dealt much in extracts from newspapers, quotations from the "Annual Register," parallel passages in forgotten speeches, arranged with a formidable array of dates rarely accurate. When the writer was of opinion he had made a point, you may be sure the hit was in italics, that last resource of the Forcible Feebles. He handled a particular in chronology as if he were proving an alibi at the Criminal Court. The censure was coarse without being strong, and vindictive when it would have been sarcastic. Now and then there was a passage which aimed at a higher flight, and nothing can be conceived more unlike genuine feeling, or more offensive to pure taste. And yet, perhaps, the most ludicrous characteristic of these factious gallimaufreys was an occasional assumption of the high moral and admonitory tone, which when we recurred to the general spirit of the discourse, and were apt to recall the character of its writer, irresistibly reminded one of Mrs. Cole and her prayer-book.

To return to Lucian Gay. It was a rule with Rigby that no one, if possible, should do anything for Lord Monmouth but himself; and as a jester must be found, he was determined that his Lordship should have the best in the market, and that he should have the credit of furnishing the article. As a reward, therefore, for many past services, and a fresh claim to his future exertions, Rigby one day broke to Gay that the hour had at length arrived when the highest object of reasonable ambition on his part, and the fulfilment of one of Rigby's long-cherished and dearest hopes, were alike to be realised. Gay was to be presented to Lord Monmouth and dine at Monmouth House.

The acquaintance was a successful one; very agreeable to both parties. Gay became an habitual guest of Lord Monmouth when his patron was in England; and in his absence received frequent and substantial marks of his kind recollection, for Lord Monmouth was generous to those who amused him.

In the meantime the hour of dinner is at hand. Coningsby, who had lost the key of his carpet-bag, which he finally cut open with a pen-knife that he found on his writing-table, and the blade

of which he broke in the operation, only reached the drawing-room as the figure of his grandfather, leaning on his ivory cane, and following his guests, was just visible in the distance. He was soon overtaken. Perceiving Coningsby, Lord Monmouth made him a bow, not so formal a one as in the morning, but still a bow, and said, "I hope you liked your drive."

CHAPTER VI.

A LITTLE dinner, not more than the Muses, with all the guests clever, and some pretty, offers human life and human nature under very favourable circumstances. In the present instance, too, every one was anxious to please, for the host was entirely well-bred, never selfish in little things, and always contributed his quota to the general fund of polished sociability.

Although there was really only one thought in every male mind present, still, regard for the ladies, and some little apprehension of the servants, banished politics from discourse during the greater part of the dinner, with the occasional exception of some rapid and flying allusion which the initiated understood, but which remained a mystery to the rest. Nevertheless, an old story now and then, well told by Mr. Ormsby, a new joke now and then well introduced by Mr. Gay, some dashing assertion by Mr. Rigby, which, though wrong, was startling; this agreeable blending of anecdote, jest, and paradox, kept everything fluent, and produced that degree of mild excitation which is desirable. Lord Monmouth sometimes summed up with an epigrammatic sentence, and turned the conversation by a question, in case it dwelt too much on the same topic. Lord Eskdale addressed himself principally to the ladies; inquired after their morning drive and doings, spoke of new fashions, and quoted a letter from Paris. Madame Colonna was not witty, but she had that sweet Roman frankness which is so charming. The presence of a beautiful woman, natural and good-tempered, even if she be not a L'Espinasse or a De Stael, is animating.

Nevertheless, owing probably to the absorbing powers of the forbidden subject, there were moments when it seemed that a pause was impending, and Mr. Ormsby, an old hand, seized one of these critical instants to address a good-natured question to Coningsby, whose acquaintance he had already cultivated by taking wine with him.

"And how do you like Eton?" asked Mr. Ormsby.

It was the identical question which had been presented to Coningsby in the memorable interview of the morning, and which

had received no reply; or rather had produced on his part a sentimental ebullition that had absolutely destined or doomed him to the Church.

"I should like to see the fellow who did *not* like Eton," said Coningsby, briskly, determined this time to be very brave.

"'Gad I must go down and see the old place," said Mr. Ormsby, touched by a pensive reminiscence. "One can get a good bed and bottle of port at the Christopher, still?"

"You had better come and try, sir," said Coningsby. "If you will come some day and dine with me at the Christopher, I will give you such a bottle of champagne as you never tasted yet."

The Marquis looked at him, but said nothing.

"Ah! I liked a dinner at the Christopher," said Mr. Ormsby; after mutton, mutton, mutton, every day, it was not a bad thing."

"We had venison for dinner every week last season," said Coningsby; "Buckhurst had it sent up from his park. But I don't care for dinner. Breakfast is my lounge."

"Ah! those little rolls and pats of butter!" said Mr. Ormsby. "Short commons, though. What do you think we did in my time? —We used to send over the way to get a mutton-chop."

"I wish you could see Buckhurst and me at breakfast," said Coningsby, "with a pound of Castle's sausages!"

"What Buckhurst is that, Harry?" inquired Lord Monmouth, in a tone of some interest, and for the first time calling him by his Christian name.

"Sir Charles Buckhurst, sir, a Berkshire man; Shirley Park is his place."

"Why, that must be Charley's son, Eskdale," said Lord Monmouth; "I had no idea he could be so young."

"He married late, you know, and had nothing but daughters for a long time."

"Well, I hope there will be no Reform Bill for Eton," said Lord Monmouth, musingly.

The servants had now retired.

"I think, Lord Monmouth," said Mr. Rigby, "we must ask permission to drink one toast to-day."

"Nay, I will myself give it," he replied. "Madame Colonna, you will, I am sure, join us when we drink—THE DUKE!"

"Ah! what a man!" exclaimed the Princess. "What a pity it is you have a House of Commons here! England would be the greatest country in the world if it were not for that House of Commons. It makes so much confusion!"

"Don't abuse our property," said Lord Eskdale, "Lord Monmouth and I have still twenty votes of that same body between us."

"And there is a combination," said Rigby, "by which you may still keep them."

"Ah! now for Rigby's combination!" said Lord Eskdale.

"The only thing that can save this country," said Rigby, "is a coalition on a sliding scale."

"You had better buy up the Birmingham Union and the other bodies," said Lord Monmouth; "I believe it might all be done for two or three hundred thousand pounds; and the newspapers too. Pitt would have settled this business long ago."

"Well, at any rate, we are in," said Rigby, "and we must do something."

"I should like to see Grey's list of new peers," said Lord Eskdale. "They say there are several members of our club in it."

"And the claims to the honour are so opposite," said Lucian Gay; "one on account of his large estate; another, because he has none; one, because he has a well-grown family to perpetuate the title; another, because he has no heir, and no power of ever obtaining one."

"I wonder how he will form his cabinet," said Lord Monmouth; "the old story won't do."

"I hear that Baring is to be one of the new cards; they say it will please in the city," said Lord Eskdale. "I suppose they will pick out of hedge and ditch everything that has ever had the semblance of liberalism."

"Affairs in my time were never so complicated," said Mr. Ormsby.

"Nay, it appears to me to lie in a nutshell," said Lucian Gay; "one party wishes to keep their old boroughs, and the other to get their new peers."

CHAPTER VII.

THE future historian of the country will be perplexed to ascertain what was the distinct object which the Duke of Wellington proposed to himself in the political manœuvres of May, 1832. It was known that the passing of the Reform Bill was a condition absolute with the King; it was unquestionable, that the first general election under the new law must ignominiously expel the Anti-Reform Ministry from power; who would then resume their seats on the Opposition benches in both Houses with the loss not only of their boroughs, but of that reputation for political consistency, which might have been some compensation for the parliamentary influence of which they had been deprived. It is difficult to recognise in this premature effort of the Anti-Reform leader to

thrust himself again into the conduct of public affairs, any indications of the prescient judgment which might have been expected from such a quarter. It savoured rather of restlessness than of energy; and, while it proved in its progress not only an ignorance on his part of the public mind, but of the feelings of his own party, it terminated under circumstances which were humiliating to the Crown, and painfully significant of the future position of the House of Lords in the new constitutional scheme.

The Duke of Wellington has ever been the votary of circumstances. He cares little for causes. He watches events rather than seeks to produce them. It is a characteristic of the military mind. Rapid combinations, the result of a quick, vigilant, and comprehensive glance, are generally triumphant in the field; but in civil affairs, where results are not immediate—in diplomacy and in the management of deliberative assemblies, where there is much intervening time and many counteracting causes—this velocity of decision, this fitful and precipitate action, are often productive of considerable embarrassment, and sometimes of terrible discomfiture. It is remarkable that men celebrated for military prudence are often found to be headstrong statesmen. In civil life a great general is frequently and strangely the creature of impulse; influenced in his political movements by the last snatch of information; and often the creature of the last aide-de-camp who has his ear.

We shall endeavour to trace in another chapter the reasons which on this, as on previous and subsequent occasions, induced Sir Robert Peel to stand aloof, if possible, from official life, and made him reluctant to re-enter the service of his Sovereign. In the present instance, even temporary success could only have been secured by the utmost decision, promptness, and energy. These were all wanting: some were afraid to follow the bold example of their leader; many were disinclined. In eight-and-forty hours it was known there was a "hitch."

The Reform party, who had been rather stupified than appalled by the accepted mission of the Duke of Wellington, collected their scattered senses, and rallied their forces. The agitators harangued, the mobs hooted. The City of London, as if the King had again tried to seize the five members, appointed a permanent committee of the Common Council to watch the fortunes of the "great national measure," and to report daily. Brookes', which was the only place that at first was really frightened and talked of compromise, grew valiant again; while young Whig heroes jumped upon club-room tables, and delivered fiery invectives. Emboldened by these demonstrations, the House of Commons met in great force, and passed a vote which struck, without disguise, at all rival powers

in the State; virtually announced its supremacy; revealed the forlorn position of the House of Lords under the new arrangement; and seemed to lay for ever the fluttering phantom of regal prerogative.

It was on the 9th of May that Lord Lyndhurst was with the King, and on the 15th all was over. Nothing in parliamentary history so humiliating as the funereal oration delivered that day by the Duke of Wellington over the old constitution, which, modelled on the Venetian, had governed England since the accession of the House of Hanover. He described his Sovereign, when his Grace first repaired to his Majesty, as in a state of the greatest "difficulty and distress," appealing to his never-failing loyalty to extricate him from his trouble and vexation. The Duke of Wellington, representing the House of Lords, sympathises with the King, and pledges his utmost efforts for his Majesty's relief. But after five days' exertion, this man of indomitable will and invincible fortunes, resigns the task in discomfiture and despair, and alleges as the only and sufficient reason of his utter and hopeless defeat, that the House of Commons had come to a vote which ran counter to the contemplated exercise of the prerogative.

From that moment power passed from the House of Lords to another assembly. But if the peers have ceased to be magnificoes, may it not also happen that the Sovereign may cease to be a Doge? It is not impossible that the political movements of our time, which seem on the surface to have a tendency to democracy, may have in reality a monarchical bias.

In less than a fortnight's time the House of Lords, like James II., having abdicated their functions by absence, the Reform Bill passed; the ardent monarch, who a few months before had expressed his readiness to go down to Parliament, in a hackney-coach if necessary, to assist its progress, now declining personally to give his assent to its provisions.

In the protracted discussions to which this celebrated measure gave rise, nothing is more remarkable than the perplexities into which the speakers of both sides are thrown, when they touch upon the nature of the representative principle. On one hand, it was maintained, that under the old system the people were virtually represented; while, on the other, it was triumphantly urged, that if the principle be conceded, the people should not be virtually, but actually represented. But who are the people? And where are you to draw a line? And why should there be any? It was urged that a contribution to the taxes was the constitutional qualification for the suffrage. But we have established a system of taxation in this country of so remarkable a nature, that the beggar who chews his quid as he sweeps a crossing, is contributing

to the imposts! Is he to have a vote? He is one of the people, and he yields his quota to the public burthens.

Amid these conflicting statements, and these confounding conclusions, it is singular that no member of either House should have recurred to the original character of these popular assemblies, which have always prevailed among the northern nations. We still retain in the antique phraseology of our statutes the term which might have beneficially guided a modern Reformer in his reconstructive labours.

When the crowned Northman consulted on the welfare of his kingdom, he assembled the ESTATES of his realm. Now an estate is a class of the nation invested with political rights. There appeared the estate of the clergy, of the barons, of other classes. In the Scandinavian kingdoms to this day, the estate of the peasants sends its representatives to the Diet. In England, under the Normans, the Church and the Baronage were convoked, together with the estate of the Community, a term which then probably described the inferior holders of land, whose tenure was not immediate of the Crown. This Third Estate was so numerous, that convenience suggested its appearance by representation; while the others, more limited, appeared, and still appear, personally. The Third Estate was reconstructed as circumstances developed themselves. It was a Reform of Parliament when the towns were summoned.

In treating the House of the Third Estate as the House of the People, and not as the House of a privileged class, the Ministry and Parliament of 1831 virtually conceded the principle of Universal Suffrage. In this point of view the ten-pound franchise was an arbitrary, irrational, and impolitic qualification. It had, indeed, the merit of simplicity, and so had the constitutions of Abbé Siéyès. But its immediate and inevitable result was Chartism.

But if the Ministry and Parliament of 1831 had announced that the time had arrived when the Third Estate should be enlarged and reconstructed, they would have occupied an intelligible position; and if, instead of simplicity of elements in its reconstruction, they had sought, on the contrary, various and varying materials which would have neutralised the painful predominance of any particular interest in the new scheme, and prevented those banded jealousies which have been its consequences, the nation would have found itself in a secure condition. Another class not less numerous than the existing one, and invested with privileges not less important, would have been added to the public estates of the realm; and the bewildering phrase "the People" would have remained, what it really is, a term of natural philosophy, and not of political science.

During this eventful week of May, 1832, when an important revolution was effected in the most considerable of modern kingdoms, in a manner so tranquil, that the victims themselves were scarcely conscious at the time of the catastrophe, Coningsby passed his hours in unaccustomed pleasures, and in novel excitement. Although he heard daily from the lips of Mr. Rigby and his friends that England was for ever lost, the assembled guests still contrived to do justice to his grandfather's excellent dinners; nor did the impending ruin that awaited them prevent the Princess Colonna from going to the Opera, whither she very good-naturedly took Coningsby. Madame Colonna, indeed, gave such gratifying accounts of her dear young friend, that Coningsby became daily a greater favourite with Lord Monmouth, who cherished the idea that his grandson had inherited not merely the colour of his eyes, but something of his shrewd and fearless spirit.

With Lucretia, Coningsby did not much advance. She remained silent and sullen. She was not beautiful; pallid, with a lowering brow, and an eye that avoided meeting another's. Madame Colonna, though good-natured, felt for her something of the affection for which step-mothers are celebrated. Lucretia, indeed, did not encourage her kindness, which irritated her step-mother, who seemed seldom to address her but to rate and chide; Lucretia never replied, but looked dogged. Her father, the Prince, did not compensate for this treatment. The memory of her mother, whom he had greatly disliked, did not soften his heart. He was a man still young; slender, not tall; very handsome, but worn; a haggard Antinous; his beautiful hair daily thinning; his dress rich and effeminate; many jewels, much lace. He seldom spoke, but was polished, though moody.

At the end of the week, Coningsby returned to Eton. On the eve of his departure, Lord Monmouth desired his grandson to meet him in his apartments on the morrow, before quitting his roof. This farewell visit was as kind and gracious as the first one had been repulsive. Lord Monmouth gave Coningsby his blessing and ten pounds; desired that he would order a dress, anything he liked, for the approaching Moptem, which Lord Monmouth meant to attend; and informed his grandson that he should order that in future a proper supply of game and venison should be forwarded to Eton for the use of himself and his friends.

CHAPTER VIII.

After eight o'clock school, the day following the return of Coningsby, according to custom, he repaired to Buckhurst's room,

where, Henry Sydney, Lord Vere, and our hero held with him their breakfast mess. They were all in the fifth form, and habitual companions, on the river or on the Fives' Wall, at cricket or at foot-ball. The return of Coningsby, their leader alike in sport and study, inspired them to-day with unusual spirits, which, to say the truth, were never particularly depressed. Where he had been, what he had seen, what he had done, what sort of fellow his grandfather was, whether the visit had been a success—here were materials for almost endless inquiry. And, indeed, to do them justice, the last question was not the least exciting to them; for the deep and cordial interest which all felt in Coningsby's welfare far outweighed the curiosity which, under ordinary circumstances, they would have experienced on the return of one of their companions, from an unusual visit to London. The report of their friend imparted to them unbounded satisfaction; when they learned that his relative was a splendid fellow; that he had been loaded with kindness and favours; that Monmouth House, the wonders of which he rapidly sketched, was hereafter to be his home; that Lord Monmouth was coming down to Montem; that Coningsby was to order any dress he liked, build a new boat if he chose; and, finally, had been pouched in a manner worthy of a Marquess and a grandfather.

"By the bye," said Buckhurst, when the hubbub had a little subsided, "I am afraid you will not half like it, Coningsby; but, old fellow, I had no idea you would be back this morning, I have asked Millbank to breakfast here."

A cloud stole over the clear brow of Coningsby.

"It was my fault," said the amiable Henry Sydney; "but I really wanted to be civil to Millbank, and as you were not here, I put Buckhurst up to ask him."

"Well," said Coningsby, as if sullenly resigned, "never mind; but why you should ask an infernal manufacturer!"

"Why the Duke always wished me to pay him some attention," said Lord Henry, mildly. "His family were so civil to us when we were at Manchester."

"Manchester, indeed!" said Coningsby; "if you knew what I do about Manchester! A pretty state we have been in in London this week past with your Manchesters and Birminghams!"

"Come—come, Coningsby," said Lord Vere, the son of a Whig minister; "I am all for Manchester and Birmingham."

"It is all up with the country I can tell you," said Coningsby, with the air of one who was in the secret.

"My father says it will all go right now," rejoined Lord Vere. "I had a letter from my sister yesterday."

"They say we shall all lose our estates, though," said Buck-

hurst; "I know I shall not give up mine without a fight. Shirley was besieged, you know, in the civil wars; and the rebels got infernally licked."

"I think that all the people about Beaumanoir would stand by the Duke," said Lord Henry, pensively.

"Well—you may depend upon it you will have it very soon,' said Coningsby. "I know it from the best authority."

"It depends on whether my father remains in," said Lord Vere. "He is the only man who can govern the country now. All say that."

At this moment Millbank entered. He was a good-looking boy, somewhat shy, and yet with a sincere expression in his countenance. He was evidently not extremely intimate with those who were now his companions. Buckhurst, and Henry Sydney, and Vere, welcomed him cordially. He looked at Coningsby with some constraint, and then said—

"You have been in London, Coningsby?"

"Yes, I have been there during all the row."

"You must have had a rare lark."

"Yes, if having your windows broken by a mob be a rare lark. They could not break my grandfather's, though. Monmouth House is in a court-yard. All noblemen's houses should be in court-yards."

"I was glad to see it all ended very well," said Millbank.

"It has not begun yet," said Coningsby.

"What?" said Millbank.

"Why—the revolution."

"The Reform Bill will prevent a revolution, my father says," said Millbank.

"By Jove! here's the goose," said Buckhurst.

At this moment there entered the room a little boy, the scion of a noble house, bearing a roasted goose, which he had carried from the kitchen of the opposite inn, the Christopher. The lower boy or fag, depositing his burthen, asked his master whether he had further need of him; and Buckhurst, after looking round the table, and ascertaining that he had not, gave him permission to retire; but he had scarcely disappeared, when his master singing out, "Lower boy, St. John!" he immediately re-entered, and demanded his master's pleasure, which was, that he should pour some water in the teapot. This being accomplished, St. John really made his escape, and retired to a pupil-room, where the bullying of a tutor, because he had no derivations, exceeded in all probability the bullying of his master, had he contrived in his passage from the Christopher to have upset the goose or dropped the sausages.

In their merry meal, the Reform Bill was forgotten. Their

thoughts were soon concentred in their little world, though it must be owned that visions of palaces and beautiful ladies did occasionally flit over the brain of one of the company. But for him especially there was much of interest and novelty. So much had happened in his absence! There was a week's arrears for him of Eton annals. They were recounted in so fresh a spirit, and in such vivid colours, that Coningsby lost nothing by his London visit. All the bold feats that had been done, and all the bright things that had been said; all the triumphs, and all the failures, and all the scrapes; how popular one master had made himself, and how ridiculous another; all was detailed with a liveliness, a candour, and a picturesque ingenuousness which would have made the fortune of a Herodotus or a Froissart.

"I'll tell you what," said Buckhurst, "I move that after twelve we five go up to Maidenhead."

"Agreed—agreed!"

CHAPTER IX.

MILLBANK was the son of one of the wealthiest manufacturers in Lancashire. His father, whose opinions were of a very democratic bent, sent his son to Eton, though he disapproved of the system of education pursued there, to show that he had as much right to do so as any Duke in the land. He had, however, brought up his only boy with a due prejudice against every sentiment or institution of an aristocratic character, and had especially impressed upon him in his school career, to avoid the slightest semblance of courting the affections or society of any member of the falsely-held superior class.

The character of the son, as much as the influence of the father, tended to the fulfilment of these injunctions. Oswald Millbank was of a proud and independent nature; reserved, a little stern. The early and constantly-reiterated dogma of his father, that he belonged to a class debarred from its just position in the social system, had aggravated the grave and somewhat discontented humour of his blood. His talents were considerable, though invested with no dazzling quality. He had not that quick and brilliant apprehension, which, combined with a memory of rare retentiveness, had already advanced Coningsby far beyond his age, and made him already looked to as the future hero of the school. But Millbank possessed one of those strong, industrious volitions whose perseverance amounts almost to genius, and nearly attains its results. Though Coningsby was by a year his junior, they were rivals. This circumstance had no tendency to remove the pre-

judice which Coningsby entertained against him, but its bias on the part of Millbank had a very contrary effect.

The influence of the individual is nowhere so sensible as at school. There the personal qualities strike without any intervening and counteracting causes. A gracious presence, noble sentiments, or a happy talent, make their way there at once, without preliminary inquiries as to what set they are in, or what family they are of, how much they have a-year, or where they live. Now, on no spirit had the influence of Coningsby, already the favourite, and soon probably to become the idol, of the school, fallen more effectually than on that of Millbank, though it was an influence that no one could suspect except its votary or its victim.

At school, friendship is a passion. It entrances the being; it tears the soul. All loves of after-life can never bring its rapture, or its wretchedness; no bliss so absorbing, no pangs of jealousy or despair so crushing and so keen! What tenderness and what devotion; what illimitable confidence; infinite revelations of inmost thoughts; what ecstatic present and romantic future; what bitter estrangements and what melting reconciliations; what scenes of wild recrimination, agitating explanations, passionate correspondence; what insane sensitiveness, and what frantic sensibility; what earthquakes of the heart and whirlwinds of the soul are confined in that simple phrase—a schoolboy's friendship! 'Tis some indefinite recollection of these mystic passages of their young emotion that makes grey-haired men mourn over the memory of their schoolboy days. It is a spell that can soften the acerbity of political warfare, and with its witchery can call forth a sigh even amid the callous bustle of fashionable saloons.

The secret of Millbank's life was a passionate admiration and affection for Coningsby. Pride, his natural reserve, and his father's injunctions, had, however, hitherto successfully combined to restrain the slightest demonstration of these sentiments. Indeed Coningsby and himself were never companions, except in school, or in some public game. The demeanour of Coningsby gave no encouragement to intimacy to one, who, under any circumstances, would have required considerable invitation to open himself. So Millbank fed in silence on a cherished idea. It was his happiness to be in the same form, to join in the same sport, with Coningsby; occasionally to be thrown in unusual contact with him, to exchange slight and not unkind words. In their division they were rivals; Millbank sometimes triumphed, but to be vanquished by Coningsby was for him not without a degree of wild satisfaction. Not a gesture, not a phrase from Coningsby, that he did not watch and ponder over and treasure up Coningsby was his model, alike in studies, in manners, or in pastimes; the aptest scholar, the gayest

wit, the most graceful associate, the most accomplished playmate: his standard of the excellent. Yet Millbank was the very last boy in the school who would have had credit given him by his companions for profound and ardent feeling. He was not indeed unpopular. The favourite of the school like Coningsby, he could, under no circumstances, ever have become; nor was he qualified to obtain that general graciousness among the multitude, which the sweet disposition of Henry Sydney, or the gay profusion of Buckhurst, acquired without an effort. Millbank was not blessed with the charm of manner. He seemed close and cold; but he was courageous, just, and inflexible; never bullied, and to his utmost would prevent tyranny. The little boys looked up to him as a stern protector; and his word, too, throughout the school was a proverb: and truth ranks a great quality among boys. In a word, Millbank was respected by those among whom he lived, and school-boys scan character more nicely than men suppose.

A brother of Henry Sydney, quartered in Lancashire, had been wounded recently in a riot, and had received great kindness from the Millbank family, in whose immediate neighbourhood the disturbance had occurred. The kind Duke had impressed on Henry Sydney to acknowledge with cordiality to the younger Millbank at Eton, the sense which his family entertained of these benefits; but though Henry lost neither time nor opportunity in obeying an injunction, which was grateful to his own heart, he failed in cherishing, or indeed creating, any intimacy with the object of his solicitude. A companionship with one who was Coningsby's relative and most familiar friend, would at the first glance have appeared, independent of all other considerations, a most desirable result for Millbank to accomplish. But, perhaps, this very circumstance afforded additional reasons for the absence of all encouragement with which he received the overtures of Lord Henry. Millbank suspected that Coningsby was not affected in his favour, and his pride recoiled from gaining, by any indirect means, an intimacy which to have obtained in a plain and express manner would have deeply gratified him. However, the urgent invitation of Buckhurst and Henry Sydney, and the fear that a persistence in refusal might be misinterpreted into churlishness, had at length brought Millbank to their breakfast-mess, though, when he accepted their invitation, he did not apprehend that Coningsby would have been present.

It was about an hour before sunset, the day of this very breakfast, and a good number of boys, in lounging groups, were collected in the Long Walk. The sports and matches of the day were over. Criticism had succeeded to action in sculling and in cricket. They talked over the exploits of the morning; canvassed

the merits of the competitors, marked the fellow whose play or whose stroke was improving; glanced at another, whose promise had not been fulfilled; discussed the pretensions, and adjudged the palm. Thus public opinion is formed. Some, too, might be seen with their books and exercises, intent on the inevitable and impending tasks. Among these, some unhappy wight in the remove, wandering about with his hat, after parochial fashion, seeking relief in the shape of a verse. A hard lot this, to know that you must be delivered of fourteen verses at least in the twenty-four hours, and to be conscious that you are pregnant of none. The lesser boys, urchins of tender years, clustered like flies round the baskets of certain vendors of sugary delicacies that rested on the Long Walk wall. The pallid countenance, the lack-lustre eye, the hoarse voice clogged with accumulated phlegm, indicated too surely the irreclaimable and hopeless votary of lollypop—the opium-eater of school-boys.

"It is settled, the match to-morrow shall be between Aquatics and Drybobs," said a senior boy; who was arranging a future match at cricket.

"But what's to be done about Fielding major?" inquired another. "He has not paid his boating money, and I say he has no right to play among the Aquatics before he has paid his money."

"Oh! but we must have Fielding major, he's such a devil of a swipe."

"I declare he shall not play among the Aquatics if he does not pay his boating money. It is an infernal shame."

"Let us ask Buckhurst. Where is Buckhurst?"

"Have you got any toffy?" inquired a dull-looking little boy, in a hoarse voice, of one of the venders of scholastic confectionary.

"Tom Trot, sir."

"No; I want toffy."

"Very nice Tom Trot, sir."

"No, I want toffy; I have been eating Tom Trot all day."

"Where is Buckhurst? We must settle about the Aquatics."

"Well, I for one will not play if Fielding major plays amongst the Aquatics. That's settled.

"Oh! nonsense; he will pay his money if you ask him."

"I shall not ask him again. The captain duns us every day. It's an infernal shame."

"I say, Burnham, where can one get some toffy? This fellow never has any."

"I'll tell you; at Barnes' on the bridge. The best toffy in the world."

"I'll go at once. I must have some toffy."

"Just help me with this verse, Collins," said one boy to another, in an imploring tone, "that's a good fellow."

"Well, give it us: first syllable in *fabri* is short; three false quantities in the two first lines! You're a pretty one. There, I have done it for you."

"That's a good fellow."

"Any fellow seen Buckhurst?"

"Gone up the river with Coningsby and Henry Sydney."

"But he must be back by this time. I want him to make the list for the match to-morrow. Where the deuce can Buckhurst be?"

And now, as rumours rise in society we know not how, so there was suddenly a flying report in this multitude—the origin of which no one in his alarm stopped to ascertain, that a boy was drowned.

Every heart was agitated.

What boy? When—where—how? Who was absent? Who had been on the river to-day? Buckhurst. The report ran that Buckhurst was drowned. Great were the trouble and consternation. Buckhurst was ever much liked; and now no one remembered anything but his good qualities.

"Who heard it was Buckhurst?" said Sedgwick, captain of the school, coming forward.

"I heard Bradford tell Palmer it was Buckhurst," said a little boy.

"Where is Bradford?"

"Here."

"What do you know about Buckhurst?"

"Wentworth told me that he was afraid Buckhurst was drowned. He heard it at the Brocas; a bargeman told him about a quarter of an hour ago."

"Here's Wentworth—Here's Wentworth!" a hundred voices exclaimed, and they formed a circle round him.

"Well, what did you hear, Wentworth?" asked Sedgwick.

"I was at the Brocas, and a Bargee told me that an Eton fellow had been drowned above Surley, and the only Eton boat above Surley to-day, as I can learn, is Buckhurst's four-oar. That is all."

There was a murmur of hope.

"Oh! come, come," said Sedgwick, "there is some chance. Who is with Buckhurst; who knows?"

"I saw him walk down to the Brocas with Vere," said a boy.

"I hope it is not Vere," said a little boy, with a tearful eye; "he never lets any fellow bully me."

"Here's Maltravers," halloed out a boy, "he knows something."

"Well, what do you know, Maltravers?"

"I heard Boots at the Christopher say that an Eton fellow was drowned, and that he had seen a person who was there."

"Bring Boots here," said Sedgwick.

Instantly a band of boys rushed over the way, and in a moment the witness was produced.

"What have you heard, Sam, about this accident?" said Sedgwick.

"Well, sir, I heerd a young gentleman was drowned above Monkey Island," said Boots.

"And no name mentioned?"

"Well, sir, I believe it was Mr. Coningsby."

A general groan of horror.

"Coningsby—Coningsby! By Heavens I hope not," said Sedgwick.

"I very much fear so," said Boots; "as how the bargeman who told me, saw Mr. Coningsby in the Lock House laid out in flannels."

"I had sooner any fellow had been drowned than Coningsby," whispered one boy to another.

"I liked him, the best fellow at Eton," responded his companion, in a smothered tone.

"What a clever fellow he was!"

"And so deuced generous!"

"He would have got the medal if he had lived."

"And how came he to be drowned? for he was such a fine swimmer!"

"I heerd Mr. Coningsby was saving another's life," continued Boots in his evidence, "which makes it in a manner more sorrowful."

"Poor Coningsby!" exclaimed a boy, bursting into tears: "I move the whole school goes into mourning."

"I wish we could get hold of this bargeman," said Sedgwick. "Now stop, stop, don't all run away in that mad manner; you frighten the people. Charles Herbert and Palmer, you two go down to the Brocas and inquire."

But just at this moment, an increased stir and excitement were evident in the Long Walk; the circle round Sedgwick opened, and there appeared Henry Sydney and Buckhurst.

There was a dead silence. It was impossible that suspense could be strained to a higher pitch. The air and countenance of Sydney and Buckhurst were rather excited than mournful or alarmed. They needed no inquiries, for before they had penetrated the circle they had become aware of its cause.

Buckhurst, the most energetic of beings, was of course the first to speak. Henry Sydney indeed looked pale and nervous; but his companion, flushed and resolute, knew exactly how to hit a popular assembly, and at once came to the point.

"It is all a false report,—an infernal lie; Coningsby is quite safe, and nobody is drowned."

There was a cheer that might have been heard at Windsor Castle. Then, turning to Sedgwick, in an under tone Buckhurst added,—

"It *is* all right, but, by Jove! we have had a shaver. I will tell you all in a moment, but we want to keep the thing quiet, and so let the fellows disperse, and we will talk afterwards."

In a few moments the Long Walk had resumed its usual character; but Sedgwick, Herbert, and one or two others, turned into the playing fields, where, undisturbed and unnoticed by the multitude, they listened to the promised communication of Buckhurst and Henry Sydney.

"You know we went up the river together," said Buckhurst. "Myself, Henry Sydney, Coningsby, Vere, and Millbank. We had breakfasted together, and after twelve agreed to go up to Maidenhead. Well, we went up much higher than we had intended. About a quarter of a mile before we had got to the Lock we pulled up; Coningsby was then steering. Well, we fastened the boat to, and were all of us stretched out on the meadow, when Millbank and Vere said they should go and bathe in the Lock Pool. The rest of us were opposed; but after Millbank and Vere had gone about ten minutes, Coningsby, who was very fresh, said he had changed his mind and should go and bathe too. So he left us. He had scarcely got to the pool when he heard a cry. There was a fellow drowning. He threw off his clothes and was in in a moment. The fact is this, Millbank had plunged in the pool and found himself in some eddies, caused by the meeting of two currents. He called out to Vere not to come, and tried to swim off. But he was beat, and seeing he was in danger, Vere jumped in. But the stream was so strong, from the great fall of water from the lasher above, that Vere was exhausted before he could reach Millbank, and nearly sank himself. Well, he just saved himself; but Millbank sank as Coningsby jumped in. What do you think of that?"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Sedgwick, Herbert, and all. The favourite oath of schoolboys perpetuates the divinity of Olympus.

"And now comes the worst. Coningsby caught Millbank when he rose; but he found himself in the midst of the same strong current that had before nearly swamped Vere. What a lucky thing that he had taken into his head not to pull to-day! Fresher

than Vere, he just managed to land Millbank and himself. The shouts of Vere called us, and we arrived to find the bodies of Millbank and Coningsby apparently lifeless, for Millbank was quite gone, and Coningsby had swooned on landing."

"If Coningsby had been lost," said Henry Sydney, "I never would have shown my face at Eton again."

"Can you conceive a position more terrible?" said Buckhurst. "I declare I shall never forget it as long as I live. However, there was the Lock House at hand; and we got blankets and brandy. Coningsby was soon all right; but Millbank, I can tell you, gave us some trouble. I thought it was all up. Didn't you, Henry Sydney?"

"The most fishy thing I ever saw," said Henry Sydney.

"Well, we were fairly frightened here," said Sedgwick. "The first report was, that you had gone, but that seemed without foundation; but Coningsby was quite given up. Where are they now?"

"They are both at their tutors'. I thought they had better keep quiet. Vere is with Millbank, and we are going back to Coningsby directly; but we thought it best to show, finding on our arrival that there were all sorts of rumours about. I think it will be best to report at once to my tutor, for he will be sure to hear something."

"I would if I were you."

CHAPTER X.

WHAT wonderful things are events! The least are of greater importance than the most sublime and comprehensive speculations! In what fanciful schemes to obtain the friendship of Coningsby had Millbank in his reveries often indulged! What combinations that were to extend over years and influence their lives! But the moment that he entered the world of action, his pride recoiled from the plans and hopes which his sympathy had inspired. His sensibility and his inordinate self-respect were always at variance. And he seldom exchanged a word with the being whose idea engrossed his affection.

And now, suddenly, an event had occurred, like all events, unforeseen, which in a few, brief, agitating, tumultuous moments, had singularly and utterly changed the relations that previously subsisted between him and the former object of his concealed tenderness. Millbank now stood with respect to Coningsby in the position of one who owes to another the greatest conceivable obligation; a favour which time could permit him neither to forget

nor to repay. Pride was a sentiment that could no longer subsist before the preserver of his life. Devotion to that being, open, almost ostentatious, was now a duty—a paramount and absorbing tie. The sense of past peril, the rapture of escape, a renewed relish for the life so nearly forfeited, a deep sentiment of devout gratitude to the Providence that had guarded over him—for Millbank was an eminently religious boy—a thought of home, and the anguish that might have overwhelmed his hearth; all these were powerful and exciting emotions for a young and fervent mind, in addition to the peculiar source of sensibility on which we have already touched. Lord Vere, who lodged in the same house as Millbank, and was sitting by his bedside, observed, as night fell, that his mind wandered.

The illness of Millbank, the character of which soon transpired, and was soon exaggerated, attracted the public attention with increased interest to the circumstances out of which it had arisen, and from which the parties principally concerned had wished to have diverted notice. The sufferer, indeed, had transgressed the rules of the school by bathing at an unlicensed spot, where there were no expert swimmers in attendance, as is customary, to instruct the practice and to guard over the lives of the young adventurers. But the circumstances with which this violation of rules had been accompanied, and the assurance of several of the party that they had not themselves infringed the regulations, combined with the high character of Millbank, made the authorities not over-anxious to visit with penalties a breach of observance which, in the case of the only proved offender, had been attended with such impressive consequences. The feat of Coningsby was extolled by all as an act of high gallantry and skill. It confirmed and increased the great reputation which he already enjoyed.

"Millbank is getting quite well," said Buckhurst to Coningsby a few days after the accident. "Henry Sydney and I are going to see him. Will you come?"

"I think we shall be too many. I will go another day," replied Coningsby.

So they went without him. They found Millbank up and reading.

"Well, old fellow," said Buckhurst, "how are you? We should have come up before, but they would not let us. And you are quite right now, eh?"

"Quite. Has there been any row about it?"

"All blown over," said Henry Sydney; "C*******y behaved like a trump."

"I have seen nobody yet," said Millbank; "they would not let me till to-day. Vere looked in this morning and left me this book,

but I was asleep. I hope they will let me out in a day or two. I want to thank Coningsby; I never shall rest till I have thanked Coningsby."

"Oh! he will come to see you," said Henry Sydney; "I asked him just now to come with us."

"Yes!" said Millbank, eagerly; "and what did he say?"

"He thought we should be too many."

"I hope I shall see him soon," said Millbank, "somehow or other."

"I will tell him to come," said Buckhurst.

"Oh! no, no, don't tell him to come," said Millbank. "Don't bore him."

"I know he is going to play a match at fives this afternoon," said Buckhurst, "for I am one."

"And who are the others?" inquired Millbank.

"Herbert and Campbell."

"Herbert is no match for Coningsby," said Millbank.

And then they talked over all that had happened since his absence; and Buckhurst gave him a very graphic report of the excitement on the afternoon of the accident; at last they were obliged to leave him.

"Well, good-bye, old fellow; we will come and see you every day. What can we do for you? Any books, or anything?"

"If any fellow asks after me," said Millbank, "tell him I shall be glad to see him. It is very dull being alone. But do not tell any fellow to come if he does not ask after me."

Notwithstanding the kind suggestions of Buckhurst and Henry Sydney, Coningsby could not easily bring himself to call on Millbank. He felt a constraint. It seemed as if he went to receive thanks. He would rather have met Millbank again in school, or in the playing fields. Without being able then to analyse his feelings, he shrank unconsciously from that ebullition of sentiment, which in more artificial circles is described as a scene. Not that any dislike of Millbank prompted him to this reserve. On the contrary, since he had conferred a great obligation on Millbank, his prejudice against him had sensibly decreased. How it would have been had Millbank saved Coningsby's life, is quite another affair. Probably, as Coningsby was by nature generous, his sense of justice might have struggled successfully with his painful sense of the overwhelming obligation. But in the present case there was no element to disturb his fair self-satisfaction. He had greatly distinguished himself; he had conferred on his rival an essential service; and the whole world rang with his applause. He began rather to like Millbank; we will not say because Millbank was the unintentional cause of his pleasurable sensations.

Really it was that the unusual circumstances had prompted him to a more impartial judgment of his rival's character. In this mood, the day after the visit of Buckhurst and Henry Sydney, Coningsby called on Millbank, but finding his medical attendant with him, Coningsby availed himself of that excuse for going away without seeing him.

The next day he left Millbank a newspaper on his way to school, time not permitting a visit. Two days after, going into his room, he found on his table a letter addressed to "Harry Coningsby, Esq."

"Eton, May —, 1832.

"DEAR CONINGSBY,—I very much fear that you must think me a very ungrateful fellow, because you have not heard from me before; but I was in hopes that I might get out and say to you what I feel; but whether I speak or write, it is quite impossible for me to make you understand the feelings of my heart to you. Now, I will say at once, that I have always liked you better than any fellow in the school, and always thought you the cleverest; indeed, I always thought that there was no one like you; but I never would say this or show this, because you never seemed to care for me, and because I was afraid you would think I merely wanted to con with you, as they used to say of some other fellows, whose names I will not mention, because they always tried to do so with Henry Sydney and you. I do not want this at all; but I want, though we may not speak to each other more than before, that we may be friends; and that you will always know that there is nothing I will not do for you, and that I like you better than any fellow at Eton. And I do not mean that this shall be only at Eton, but afterwards, wherever we may be, that you will always remember that there is nothing I will not do for you. Not because you saved my life, though that is a great thing, but because before that I would have done anything for you; only, for the cause above mentioned, I would not show it. I do not expect that we shall be more together than before; nor can I ever suppose that you could like me as you like Henry Sydney and Buckhurst, or even as you like Vere; but still I hope you will always think of me with kindness now, and let me sign myself, if ever I do write to you,

"Your most attached, affectionate, and devoted friend,

"OSWALD MILLBANK."

CHAPTER XI.

ABOUT a fortnight after this nearly fatal adventure on the river, it was Montem. One need hardly remind the reader that this

celebrated ceremony, of which the origin is lost in obscurity, and which now occurs triennially, is the tenure by which Eton College holds some of its domains. It consists in the waving of a flag by one of the scholars, on a mount near the village of Salt Hill, which, without doubt, derives its name from the circumstance that on this day every visitor to Eton, and every traveller in its vicinity, from the monarch to the peasant, are stopped on the road by youthful brigands in picturesque costume, and summoned to contribute "salt," in the shape of coin of the realm, to the purse collecting for the Captain of Eton, the senior scholar on the Foundation, who is about to repair to King's College, Cambridge.

On this day the Captain of Eton appears in a dress as martial as his title: indeed, each sixth-form boy represents in his uniform, though not perhaps according to the exact rules of the Horse Guards, an officer of the army. One is a marshal, another an ensign. There is a lieutenant, too; and the remainder are sergeants. Each of those who are intrusted with these ephemeral commissions has one or more attendants, the number of these varying according to his rank. These servitors are selected according to the wishes of the several members of the sixth form, out of the ranks of the lower boys, that is, those boys who are below the fifth form; and all these attendants are arrayed in a variety of fancy dresses. The Captain of the Oppidans and the senior Colleger next to the Captain of the school, figure also in fancy costume, and are called "Saltbearers." It is their business, together with the twelve senior Collegers of the fifth form, who are called "Runners," and whose costume is also determined by the taste of the wearers, to levy the contributions. And all the Oppidans of the fifth form, among whom ranked Coningsby, class as "Corporals;" and are severally followed by one or more lower boys, who are denominated "Polemen," but who appear in their ordinary dress.

It was a fine, bright morning; the bells of Eton and Windsor rang merrily; everybody was astir, and every moment some gay equipage drove in the town. Gaily clustering in the thronged precincts of the College, might be observed many a glistening form; airy Greek or sumptuous Ottoman, heroes of the Holy Sepulchre, Spanish Hidalgos who had fought at Pavia, Highland Chiefs who had charged at Culloden, gay in the tartan of Prince Charlie. The Long Walk was full of busy groups in scarlet coats or fanciful uniforms; some in earnest conversation, some criticising the arriving guests; others encircling some magnificent hero, who astounded them with his slashed doublet or flowing plume.

A knot of boys, sitting on the Long Walk wall, with their feet swinging in the air, watched the arriving guests of the Provost.

"I say, Townshend," said one, "there's Grobbleton; he *was* a bully. I wonder if that's his wife? Who's this? The Duke of Agincourt. He wasn't an Eton fellow? Yes, he was. He was called Poictiers then. Oh! ah! his name is in the upper school, very large, under Charles Fox. I say, Townshend, did you see Saville's turban? What was it made of? He says his mother brought it from Grand Cairo. Didn't he just look like the Saracen's Head? Here are some Dons. That's Hallam! We'll give him a cheer. I say, Townshend, look at this fellow. He doesn't think small beer of himself. I wonder who he is? The Duke of Wellington's valet come to say his master is engaged. Oh! by Jove, he heard you! I wonder if the Duke will come? Won't we give him a cheer!"

"By Jove! who is this?" exclaimed Townshend, and he jumped from the wall, and, followed by his companions, rushed towards the road.

Two britskas, each drawn by four grey horses of mettle, and each accompanied by outriders as well mounted, were advancing at a rapid pace along the road that leads from Slough to the College. But they were destined to an irresistible check. About fifty yards before they had reached the gate that leads into Weston's Yard, a ruthless but splendid Albanian, in crimson and gold embroidered jacket, and snowy camise, started forward, and holding out his silver-sheathed yataghan commanded the postilions to stop. A Peruvian Inca on the other side of the road gave a simultaneous command, and would infallibly have transfixed the outriders with an arrow from his unerring bow, had they for an instant hesitated. The Albanian Chief then advanced to the door of the carriage, which he opened, and in a tone of great courtesy, announced that he was under the necessity of troubling its inmates for "salt." There was no delay. The Lord of the equipage with the amiable condescension of a "grand monarque," expressed his hope that the collection would be an ample one, and as an old Etonian, placed in the hands of the Albanian his contribution, a magnificent purse furnished for the occasion, and heavy with gold.

"Don't be alarmed, ladies," said a very handsome young officer, laughing, and taking off his cocked hat.

"Ah!" exclaimed one of the ladies, turning at the voice, and starting a little. "Ah! it is Mr. Coningsby."

Lord Eskdale paid the salt for the next carriage. "Do they come down pretty stiff?" he inquired, and then, pulling forth a roll of bank-notes from the pocket of his pea-jacket, he wished them good morning.

The courtly Provost, then the benignant Goodall, a man who, though his experience of life was confined to the colleges in which he had passed his days, was naturally gifted with the rarest of all endowments, the talent of reception; and whose happy bearing and gracious manner—a smile ever in his eye and a lively word ever on his lip—must be recalled by all with pleasant recollections, welcomed Lord Monmouth and his friends to an assemblage of the noble, the beautiful, and the celebrated, gathered together in rooms not unworthy of them, as you looked upon their interesting walls, breathing with the portraits of the heroes whom Eton boasts—from Wotton to Wellesley. Music sounded in the quadrangle of the College, in which the boys were already quickly assembling. The Duke of Wellington had arrived, and the boys were cheering a hero, who was also an Eton field-marshal. From an oriel window in one of the Provost's rooms, Lord Monmouth, surrounded by every circumstance that could make life delightful, watched with some intentness the scene in the quadrangle beneath.

"I would give his fame," said Lord Monmouth, "if I had it, and my wealth—to be sixteen."

Five hundred of the youth of England, sparkling with health, high spirits, and fancy dresses, were now assembled in the quadrangle. They formed into rank, and headed by a band of the Guards, thrice they marched round the court. Then quitting the College, they commenced their progress "ad Montem." It was a brilliant spectacle to see them defiling through the playing fields, —those bowery meads; the river sparkling in the sun; the castled heights of Windsor, their glorious landscape; behind them, the pinnacles of their College.

The road from Eton to Salt Hill was clogged with carriages; the broad fields as far as eye could range were covered with human beings. Amid the burst of martial music and the shouts of the multitude, the band of heroes, as if they were marching from Athens, or Thebes, or Sparta, to some heroic deed, encircled the mount; the ensign reaches its summit, and then, amid a deafening cry of "Floreat Etona!" he unfurls, and thrice waves the consecrated standard.

"Lord Monmouth," said Mr. Rigby to Coningsby, "wishes that you should beg your friends to dine with him. Of course you will ask Lord Henry and your friend Sir Charles Buckhurst; and is there any one else that you would like to invite?"

"Why there is a Vere," said Coningsby, hesitating, "and——"

"Vere! What Lord Vere?" said Mr. Rigby. "Hum! He is one of your friends, is he? His father has done a great deal of mischief, but still he is Lord Vere. Well, of course, you can invite Vere."

"There is another fellow I should like to ask very much," said Coningsby, "if Lord Monmouth would not think I was asking too many."

"Never fear that; he sent me particularly to tell you to invite as many as you liked."

"Well, then, I should like to ask Millbank."

"Millbank!" said Mr. Rigby, a little excited, and then he added, "Is that a son of Lady Albinia Millbank."

"No; his mother is not a Lady Albinia, but he is a great friend of mine. His father is a Lancashire manufacturer."

"By no means," exclaimed Mr. Rigby, quite agitated. "There is nothing in the world that Lord Monmouth dislikes so much as Manchester manufacturers, and particularly if they bear the name of Millbank. It must not be thought of, my dear Harry. I hope you have not spoken to the young man on the subject. I assure you it is quite out of the question. It would make Lord Monmouth quite ill. It would spoil everything,—quite upset him."

It was, of course, impossible for Coningsby to urge his wishes against such representations. He was disappointed—rather amazed; but Madame Colonna having sent for him to introduce her to some of the scenes and details of Eton life, his vexation was soon absorbed in the pride of acting in the face of his companions as the cavalier of a beautiful lady, and becoming the cicerone of the most brilliant party that had attended Montem. He presented his friends, too, to Lord Monmouth, who gave them a most cordial invitation to dine with him at his hotel at Windsor, which they most warmly accepted. Buckhurst delighted the Marquess by his reckless genius. Even Lucretia deigned to appear amused; especially when on visiting the upper school, the name of CARDIFF, the title Lord Monmouth bore in his youthful days, was pointed out to her by Coningsby, cut with his grandfather's own knife on the classic panels of that memorable wall in which scarcely a name that has flourished in our history, since the commencement of the eighteenth century, may not be observed with curious admiration.

It was the humour of Lord Monmouth that the boys should be entertained with the most various and delicious banquet that luxury could devise or money could command. For some days beforehand orders had been given for the preparation of this festival. Our friends did full justice to their Lucullus; Buckhurst especially, who gave his opinion on the most refined dishes with all the intrepidity of saucy ignorance, and occasionally shook his head over a glass of Hermitage or Côte Rôtie with a dissatisfaction which a satiated Sybarite could not have exceeded. Considering all things, Coningsby and his friends exhibited a great deal of self-command; but they were gay, even to the verge of frolic. But

then the occasion justified it, as much as their youth. All were in high spirits. Madame Colonna declared that she had met nothing in England equal to Montem; that it was a Protestant Carnival; and that its only fault was that it did not last forty days. The Prince himself was all animation, and took wine with every one of the Etonians several times. All went on flowingly until Mr. Rigby contradicted Buckhurst on some point of Eton discipline, which Buckhurst would not stand. He rallied Mr. Rigby roundly, and Coningsby, full of champagne, and owing Rigby several years of contradiction, followed up the assault. Lord Monmouth, who liked a butt, and had a weakness for boisterous gaiety, slily encouraged the boys, till Rigby began to lose his temper and get noisy.

The lads had the best of it; they said a great many funny things, and delivered themselves of several sharp retorts; whereas there was something ridiculous in Rigby putting forth his "slashing" talents against such younkers. However, he brought the infliction on himself by his strange habit of deciding on subjects of which he knew nothing, and of always contradicting persons on the very subjects of which they were necessarily masters.

To see Rigby baited was more amusement to Lord Monmouth even than Montem. Lucian Gay, however, when the affair was getting troublesome, came forward as a diversion. He sang an extemporaneous song on the ceremony of the day, and introduced the names of all the guests at the dinner, and of a great many other persons besides. This was capital! The boys were in raptures, but when the singer threw forth a verse about Doctor Keate, the applause became uproarious.

"Good-bye, my dear Harry," said Lord Monmouth, when he bade his grandson farewell. "I am going abroad again; I cannot remain in this Radical-ridden country. Remember, though I am away, Monmouth House is your home,—at least as long as it belongs to me. I understand my tailor has turned Liberal, and is going to stand for one of the metropolitan districts,—a friend of Lord Durham; perhaps I shall find him in when I return. I fear there are evil days for the NEW GENERATION!"

END OF BOOK I.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

It was early in November, 1834, and a large shooting party was assembled at Beaumanoir, the seat of that great nobleman, who was the father of Henry Sydney. England is unrivalled for two things—sporting and politics. They were combined at Beaumanoir; for the guests came not merely to slaughter the Duke's pheasants, but to hold council on the prospects of the party, which, it was supposed by the initiated, began at this time to indicate some symptoms of brightening.

The success of the Reform Ministry on their first appeal to the new constituency which they had created, had been fatally complete. But the triumph was as destructive to the victors as to the vanquished.

"We are too strong," prophetically exclaimed one of the fortunate cabinet, which found itself supported by an inconceivable majority of three hundred. It is to be hoped that some future publisher of private memoirs may have preserved some of the traits of that crude and short-lived parliament, when old Cobbett insolently thrust Sir Robert from the prescriptive seat of the chief of opposition, and treasury understrappers sneered at the "queer lot" that had arrived from Ireland, little foreseeing what a high bidding that "queer lot" would eventually command. Gratitude to Lord Grey was the hustings-cry at the end of 1832, the pretext that was to return to the new-modelled House of Commons none but men devoted to the Whig cause. The successful simulation, like everything that is false, carried within it the seeds of its own dissolution. Ingratitude to Lord Grey was more the fashion at the commencement of 1834, and before the close of that eventful year, the once popular Reform Ministry was upset, and the eagerly-sought Reformed Parliament dissolved!

It can scarcely be alleged that the public was altogether unprepared for this catastrophe. Many deemed it inevitable; few thought it imminent. The career of the Ministry, and the existence of the Parliament, had indeed from the first been turbulent and fitful. It was known from authority, that there were dissensions in the cabinet; while a House of Commons which passed votes on subjects not less important than a repeal of a tax, or the

impeachment of a judge, on one night, and rescinded its resolutions on the following, certainly established no increased claims to the confidence of its constituents in its discretion. Nevertheless, there existed at this period a prevalent conviction that the Whig party, by a great stroke of state, similar in magnitude and effect to that which in the preceding century had changed the dynasty, had secured to themselves the government of this country for, at least, the lives of the present generation. And even the well-informed in such matters were inclined to look upon the perplexing circumstances to which we have alluded rather as symptoms of a want of discipline in a new system of tactics, than as evidences of any essential and deeply-rooted disorder.

The startling rapidity, however, of the strange incidents of 1834; the indignant, soon to become vituperative, secession of a considerable section of the cabinet, some of them esteemed too at that time among its most efficient members; the piteous deprecation of "pressure from without," from lips hitherto deemed too stately for entreaty, followed by the Trades' Union, thirty thousand strong, parading in procession to Downing-street; the Irish negotiations of Lord Hatherton, strange blending of complex intrigue and almost infantile ingenuousness; the still inexplicable resignation of Lord Althorp, hurriedly followed by his still more mysterious resumption of power, the only result of his precipitate movements being the fall of Lord Grey himself, attended by circumstances which even a friendly historian could scarcely describe as honourable to his party or dignified to himself; latterly, the extemporaneous address of King William to the Bishops; the vagrant and grotesque apocalypse of the Lord Chancellor; and the fierce recrimination and memorable defiance of the Edinburgh banquet—all these impressive instances of public affairs and public conduct had combined to create a predominant opinion that, whatever might be the consequences, the prolonged continuance of the present party in power was a clear impossibility.

It is evident that the suicidal career of what was then styled the Liberal party had been occasioned and stimulated by its unnatural excess of strength. The apoplectic plethora of 1834 was not less fatal than the paralytic tenuity of 1841. It was not feasible to gratify so many ambitions, or to satisfy so many expectations. Every man had his double; the heels of every placeman were dogged by friendly rivals ready to trip them up. There were even two cabinets; the one that met in council, and the one that met in cabal. The consequence of destroying the legitimate Opposition of the country was, that a moiety of the supporters of Government had to discharge the duties of Opposition.

Herein, then, we detect the real cause of all that irregular and

unsettled carriage of public men which so perplexed the nation after the passing of the Reform Act. No government can be long secure without a formidable Opposition. It reduces their supporters to that tractable number which can be managed by the joint influences of fruition and of hope. It offers vengeance to the discontented, and distinction to the ambitious; and employs the energies of aspiring spirits, who otherwise may prove traitors in a division or assassins in a debate.

The general election of 1832 abrogated the Parliamentary Opposition of England, which had practically existed for more than a century and a half. And what a series of equivocal transactions and mortifying adventures did the withdrawal of this salutary restraint entail on the party which then so loudly congratulated themselves and the country that they were at length relieved from its odious repression! In the hurry of existence one is apt too generally to pass over the political history of the times in which we ourselves live. The two years that followed the Reform of the House of Commons are full of instruction, on which a young man would do well to ponder. It is hardly possible that he could rise from the study of these annals without a confirmed disgust for political intrigue; a dazzling practice, apt at first to fascinate youth, for it appeals at once to our invention and our courage, but one which really should only be the resource of the second-rate. Great minds must trust to great truths and great talents for their rise, and nothing else.

While, however, as the autumn of 1834 advanced, the people of this country became gradually sensible of the necessity of some change in the councils of their Sovereign, no man felt capable of predicting by what means it was to be accomplished, or from what quarry the new materials were to be extracted. The Tory party, according to those perverted views of Toryism unhappily too long prevalent in this country, was held to be literally defunct, except by a few old battered crones of office, crouched round the embers of faction which they were fanning, and muttering "reaction" in mystic whispers. It cannot be supposed indeed for a moment, that the distinguished personage who had led that party in the House of Commons previously to the passing of the act of 1832, ever despaired in consequence of his own career. His then time of life, the perfection, almost the prime, of manhood; his parliamentary practice, doubly estimable in an inexperienced assembly; his political knowledge; his fair character and reputable position; his talents and tone as a public speaker, which he had always aimed to adapt to the habits and culture of that middle class from which it was concluded the benches of the new Parliament were mainly to be recruited—all these were qualities the possession of

which must have assured a mind not apt to be disturbed in its calculations by any intemperate heats, that with time and patience the game was yet for him.

Unquestionably, whatever may have been insinuated, this distinguished person had no inkling that his services in 1834 might be claimed by his Sovereign. At the close of the session of that year he had quitted England with his family, and had arrived at Rome, where it was his intention to pass the winter. The party charges that have imputed to him a previous and sinister knowledge of the intentions of the Court, appear to have been made not only in ignorance of the personal character, but of the real position, of the future minister.

It had been the misfortune of this eminent gentleman when he first entered public life, to become identified with a political connection which, having arrogated to itself the name of an illustrious historical party, pursued a policy which was either founded on no principle whatever, or on principles exactly contrary to those which had always guided the conduct of the great Tory leaders. The chief members of this official confederacy were men distinguished by none of the conspicuous qualities of statesmen. They had none of the divine gifts that govern senates and guide councils. They were not orators; they were not men of deep thought or happy resource, or of penetrative and sagacious minds. Their political ken was essentially dull and contracted. They expended some energy in obtaining a defective, blundering acquaintance with foreign affairs; they knew as little of the real state of their own country as savages of an approaching eclipse. This factious league had shuffled themselves into power by clinging to the skirts of a great minister, the last of Tory statesmen, but who, in the unparalleled and confounding emergencies of his latter years, had been forced, unfortunately for England, to relinquish Toryism. His successors inherited all his errors without the latent genius, which in him might have still rallied and extricated him from the consequences of his disasters. His successors did not merely inherit his errors; they exaggerated, they caricatured them. They rode into power on a spring-tide of all the rampant prejudices and rancorous passions of their time. From the King to the boor their policy was a mere pandering to public ignorance. Impudently usurping the name of that party of which nationality, and therefore universality, is the essence, these pseudo-Tories made Exclusion the principle of their political constitution, and Restriction the genius of their commercial code.

The blind goddess that plays with human fortunes has mixed up the memory of these men with traditions of national glory. They conducted to a prosperous conclusion the most renowned war

in which England has ever been engaged. Yet every military conception that emanated from their cabinet was branded by their characteristic want of grandeur. Chance, however, sent them a great military genius, whom they treated for a long time with indifference, and whom they never heartily supported until his career had made him their master. His transcendent exploits, and European events even greater than his achievements, placed in the manikin grasp of the English ministry—the settlement of Europe.

The act of the Congress of Vienna remains the eternal monument of their diplomatic knowledge and political sagacity. Their capital feats were the creation of two kingdoms, both of which are already erased from the map of Europe. They made no single preparation for the inevitable, almost impending, conjunctures of the East. All that remains of the pragmatic arrangements of the mighty congress of Vienna is the mediatisation of the petty German princes.

But the settlement of Europe by the pseudo-Tories was the dictate of inspiration compared with their settlement of England. The peace of Paris found the government of this country in the hands of a body of men of whom it is no exaggeration to say that they were ignorant of every principle of every branch of political science. As long as our domestic administration was confined merely to the raising of a revenue, they levied taxes with gross facility from the industry of a country too busy to criticise or complain. But when the excitement and distraction of war had ceased, and they were forced to survey the social elements that surrounded them, they seemed, for the first time, to have become conscious of their own incapacity. These men, indeed, were the mere children of routine. They prided themselves on being practical men. In the language of this defunct school of statesmen, a practical man is a man who practises the blunders of his predecessors.

Now commenced that Condition-of-England Question of which our generation hears so much. During five-and-twenty years every influence that can develope the energies and resources of a nation had been acting with concentrated stimulation on the British Isles. National peril and national glory; the perpetual menace of invasion, the continual triumph of conquest; the most extensive foreign commerce that was ever conducted by a single nation; an illimitable currency; an internal trade supported by swarming millions, whom manufactures and inclosure-bills summoned into existence; above all, the supreme control obtained by man over mechanic power—these are some of the causes of that rapid advance of material civilization in England, to which the annals of the world can afford no parallel. But there was no pro-

portionate advance in our moral civilization. In the hurry-skurry of money-making, men-making, and machine-making, we had altogether outgrown, not the spirit, but the organization, of our institutions.

The peace came; the stimulating influences suddenly ceased; the people, in a novel and painful position, found themselves without guides. They went to the ministry; they asked to be guided; they asked to be governed. Commerce requested a code; trade required a currency; the unfranchised subject solicited his equal privilege; suffering labour clamoured for its rights; a new race demanded education. What did the ministry do?

They fell into a panic. Having fulfilled during their lives the duties of administration, they were frightened because they were called upon, for the first time, to perform the functions of government. Like all weak men, they had recourse to what they called strong measures. They determined to put down the multitude. They thought they were imitating Mr. Pitt, because they mistook disorganization for sedition.

Their projects of relief were as ridiculous as their system of coercion was ruthless; both were alike founded in intense ignorance. When we recall Mr. Vansittart with his currency resolutions; Lord Castlereagh with his plans for the employment of labour; and Lord Sidmouth with his plots for ensnaring the laborious; we are tempted to imagine that the present epoch has been one of peculiar advances in political ability, and marvel how England could have attained her present pitch under a series of such governors.

We should, however, be labouring under a very erroneous impression. Run over the statesmen that have figured in England since the accession of the present family, and we may doubt whether there be one, with the exception perhaps of the Duke of Newcastle, who would have been a worthy colleague of the council of Mr. Perceval, or the early cabinet of Lord Liverpool. Assuredly the genius of Bolingbroke and the sagacity of Walpole would have alike recoiled from such men and such measures. And if we take the individuals who were governing England immediately before the French Revolution, one need only refer to the speeches of Mr. Pitt, and especially to those of that profound statesman and most instructed man, Lord Shelburne, to find that we can boast no remarkable superiority either in political justice or in political economy. One must attribute this degeneracy, therefore, to the long war and our insular position, acting upon men naturally of inferior abilities, and unfortunately, in addition, of illiterate habits.

In the meantime, notwithstanding all the efforts of the political

Panglosses who, in evening Journals and Quarterly Reviews, were continually proving that this was the best of all possible governments, it was evident to the ministry itself that the machine must stop. The class of Rigbys indeed at this period, one eminently favourable to that fungous tribe, greatly distinguished themselves. They demonstrated in a manner absolutely convincing, that it was impossible for any person to possess any ability, knowledge, or virtue, any capacity of reasoning, any ray of fancy or faculty of imagination, who was not a supporter of the existing administration. If any one impeached the management of a department, the public was assured that the accuser had embezzled; if any one complained of the conduct of a colonial governor, the complainant was announced as a returned convict. An amelioration of the criminal code was discountenanced because a search in the parish register of an obscure village proved that the proposer had not been born in wedlock. A relaxation of the commercial system was denounced because one of its principal advocates was a Socinian. The inutility of Parliamentary Reform was ever obvious since Mr. Rigby was a member of the House of Commons.

To us, with our "Times" newspaper every morning on our breakfast-table, bringing, on every subject which can interest the public mind, a degree of information and intelligence which must form a security against any prolonged public misconception, it seems incredible that only five-and-twenty years ago the English mind could have been so ridden and hoodwinked, and that, too, by men of mean attainments and moderate abilities. But the war had directed the energies of the English people into channels by no means favourable to political education. Conquerors of the world, with their ports filled with the shipping of every clime, and their manufactories supplying the European continent, in the art of self-government, that art in which their fathers excelled, they had become literally children; and Rigby and his brother hirelings were the nurses that frightened them with hideous fables and ugly words.

Notwithstanding, however, all this successful mystification, the Arch-Mediocrity who presided, rather than ruled, over this Cabinet of Mediocrities, became hourly more conscious that the inevitable transition from fulfilling the duties of an administration to performing the functions of a government could not be conducted without talents and knowledge. The Arch-Mediocrity had himself some glimmering traditions of political science. He was sprung from a laborious stock, had received some training, and though not a statesman, might be classed among those whom the Lord Keeper Williams used to call "statemongers." In a subordinate position his meagre diligence and his frigid method might not have

been without value; but the qualities that he possessed were misplaced; nor can any character be conceived less invested with the happy properties of a leader. In the conduct of public affairs his disposition was exactly the reverse of that which is the characteristic of great men. He was peremptory in little questions, and great ones he left open.

In the natural course of events, in 1819 there ought to have been a change of government and another party in the state should have entered into office; but the Whigs, though they counted in their ranks at that period an unusual number of men of great ability, and formed, indeed, a compact and spirited opposition, were unable to contend against the new adjustment of borough influence which had occurred during the war, and under the protracted administration by which that war had been conducted. New families had arisen on the Tory side that almost rivalled old Newcastle himself in their electioneering management; and it was evident that unless some reconstruction of the House of Commons could be effected, the Whig party could never obtain a permanent hold of official power. Hence, from that period, the Whigs became Parliamentary Reformers.

It was inevitable, therefore, that the country should be governed by the same party; indispensable that the ministry should be renovated by new brains and blood. Accordingly, a Mediocrity, not without repugnance, was induced to withdraw, and the great name of Wellington supplied his place in council. The talents of the Duke, as they were then understood, were not exactly of the kind most required by the cabinet, and his colleagues were careful that he should not occupy too prominent a post; but still it was an impressive acquisition, and imparted to the ministry a semblance of renown.

There was an individual who had not long entered public life, but who had already filled considerable, though still subordinate, offices. Having acquired a certain experience of the duties of administration, and distinction for his mode of fulfilling them, he had withdrawn from his public charge; perhaps because he found it a barrier to the attainment of that parliamentary reputation for which he had already shown both a desire and a capacity; perhaps, because being young and independent, he was not overanxious irremediably to identify his career with a school of politics of the infallibility of which his experience might have already made him a little sceptical. But he possessed the talents that were absolutely wanted, and the terms were at his own dictation. Another, and a very distinguished Mediocrity who would not resign, was thrust out, and Mr. Peel became Secretary of State.

From this moment dates that intimate connection between the

Duke of Wellington and the present First Minister, which has exercised a considerable influence over the career of individuals and the course of affairs. It was the sympathetic result of superior minds placed among inferior intelligences, and was, doubtless, assisted by a then mutual conviction, that the difference of age, the circumstance of sitting in different houses, and the general contrast of their previous pursuits and accomplishments, rendered personal rivalry out of the question. From this moment, too, the domestic government of the country assumed a new character, and one universally admitted to have been distinguished by a spirit of enlightened progress and comprehensive amelioration.

A short time after this, a third and most distinguished Mediocrity died; and Canning, whom they had twice worried out of the cabinet, where they had tolerated him some time in an obscure and ambiguous position, was recalled just in time from his impending banishment, installed in the first post in the Lower House, and intrusted with the seals of the Foreign Office. The Duke of Wellington had coveted them, nor could Lord Liverpool have been insensible to his Grace's peculiar fitness for such duties; but strength was required in the House of Commons, where they had only one Secretary of State, a young man already distinguished, yet untried as a leader, and surrounded by colleagues notoriously incapable to assist him in debate.

The accession of Mr. Canning to the cabinet, in a position, too, of surpassing influence, soon led to a further weeding of the Mediocrities, and among other introductions, to the memorable entrance of Mr. Huskisson. In this wise did that cabinet, once notable only for the absence of all those qualities which authorise the possession of power, come to be generally esteemed as a body of men, who for parliamentary eloquence, official practice, political information, sagacity in council, and a due understanding of their epoch, were inferior to none that had directed the policy of the empire since the Revolution.

If we survey the tenor of the policy of the Liverpool Cabinet during the latter moiety of its continuance, we shall find its characteristic to be a partial recurrence to those frank principles of government which Mr. Pitt had revived during the latter part of the last century from precedents that had been set us, either in practice or in dogma, during its earlier period by statesmen, who then not only bore the title, but professed the opinions, of Tories. Exclusive principles in the constitution, and restrictive principles in commerce, have grown up together; and have really nothing in common with the ancient character of our political settlement, or the manners and customs of the English people. Confidence in the loyalty of the nation, testified by munificent grants of rights

and franchises, and favour to an expansive system of traffic, were distinctive qualities of the English sovereignty, until the House of Commons usurped the better portion of its prerogatives. A widening of our electoral scheme, great facilities to commerce, and the rescue of our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects from the Puritanic yoke, from fetters which have been fastened on them by English Parliaments in spite of the protests and exertions of English Sovereigns; these were the three great elements and fundamental truths of the real Pitt system—a system founded on the traditions of our monarchy, and caught from the writings, the speeches, the councils, of those who, for the sake of these and analogous benefits, had ever been anxious that the Sovereign of England should never be degraded into the position of a Venetian Doge.

It is in the plunder of the Church that we must seek for the primary cause of our political exclusion, and our commercial restraint. That unhallowed booty created a factitious aristocracy, ever fearful that they might be called upon to regorge their sacrilegious spoil. To prevent this they took refuge in political religionism, and paltering with the disturbed consciences, or the pious fantasies of a portion of the people, they organised them into religious sects. These became the unconscious Prætorians of their ill-gotten domains. At the head of these religionists, they have continued ever since to govern, or powerfully to influence this country. They have in that time pulled down thrones and churches, changed dynasties, abrogated and remodelled parliaments; they have disfranchised Scotland, and confiscated Ireland. One may admire the vigour and consistency of the Whig party, and recognise in their career that unity of purpose that can only spring from a great principle; but the Whigs introduced sectarian religion, sectarian religion led to political exclusion, and political exclusion was soon accompanied by commercial restraint.

It would be fanciful to assume that the Liverpool Cabinet, in their ameliorating career, was directed by any desire to recur to the primordial tenêts of the Tory party. That was not an epoch when statesmen cared to prosecute the investigation of principles. It was a period of happy and enlightened practice. A profounder policy is the offspring of a time like the present, when the original postulates of institutions are called in question. The Liverpool Cabinet unconsciously approximated to these opinions, because from careful experiment they were convinced of their beneficial tendency, and they thus bore an unintentional and impartial testimony to their truth. Like many men, who think they are inventors, they were only reproducing ancient wisdom.

But one must ever deplore that this ministry, with all their

talents and generous ardour, did not advance to principles. It is always perilous to adopt expediency as a guide; but the choice may be sometimes imperative. These statements, however, took expediency for their director, when principle would have given them all that expediency insured, and much more.

This ministry, strong in the confidence of the sovereign, the parliament, and the people, might, by the courageous promulgation of great historical truths, have gradually formed a public opinion, that would have permitted them to organise the Tory party on a broad, a permanent and national basis. They might have nobly effected a complete settlement of Ireland, which a shattered section of this very cabinet was forced a few years after to do partially, and in an equivocating and equivocal manner. They might have concluded a satisfactory reconstruction of the third estate, without producing that convulsion with which, from its violent fabrication, our social system still vibrates. Lastly, they might have adjusted the rights and properties of our national industries in a manner which would have prevented that fierce and fatal rivalry that is now disturbing every hearth of the United Kingdom.

We may, therefore, visit on the *laches* of this ministry the introduction of that new principle and power into our constitution which ultimately may absorb all—AGITATION. This cabinet, then, with so much brilliancy on its surface, is the real parent of the Roman Catholic Association, the Political Unions, the Anti-Corn-Law League.

There is no influence at the same time so powerful and so singular as that of individual character. It arises as often from the weakness of the character as from its strength. The dispersion of this clever and showy ministry is a fine illustration of this truth. One morning the Arch-Mediocrity himself died. At the first blush, it would seem that little difficulties could be experienced in finding his substitute. His long occupation of the post proved, at any rate, that the qualification was not excessive. But this cabinet, with its serene and blooming visage, had been all this time charged with fierce and emulous ambitions. They waited the signal, but they waited in grim repose. The death of the nominal leader, whose formal superiority, wounding no vanity, and offending no pride, secured in their councils equality among the able, was the tocsin of their anarchy. There existed in this cabinet two men, who were resolved immediately to be prime ministers; a third who was resolved eventually to be prime minister, but would at any rate occupy no ministerial post without the lead of a House of Parliament; and a fourth, who felt himself capable of being prime mi-

nister, but despaired of the revolution which could alone make nim one; and who found an untimely end when that revolution had arrived.

Had Mr. Secretary Canning remained leader of the House of Commons under the Duke of Wellington, all that he gained by the death of Lord Liverpool was a master. Had the Duke of Wellington become Secretary of State under Mr. Canning, he would have materially advanced his political position, not only by holding the seals of a high department in which he was calculated to excel, but by becoming leader of the House of Lords. But his Grace was induced by certain court intriguers to believe that the King would send for him, and he was also aware that Mr. Peel would no longer serve under any minister in the House of Commons. Under any circumstances it would have been impossible to keep the Liverpool Cabinet together. The struggle, therefore, between the Duke of Wellington and "my dear Mr. Canning," was internecine, and ended somewhat unexpectedly.

And here we must stop to do justice to our friend Mr. Rigby, whose conduct on this occasion was distinguished by a bustling dexterity which was quite charming. He had, as we have before intimated, on the credit of some clever lampoons written during the Queen's trial, which were, in fact, the effusions of Lucian Gay, wriggled himself into a sort of occasional unworthy favour at the palace, where he was half butt and half buffoon. Here, during the interregnum occasioned by the death, or rather inevitable retirement, of Lord Liverpool, Mr. Rigby contrived to scrape up a conviction that the Duke was the winning horse, and in consequence there appeared a series of leading articles in a notorious evening newspaper, in which it was, as Tadpole and Taper declared, most "slashingly" shown, that the son of an actress could never be tolerated as a Prime Minister of England. Not content with this, and never doubting for a moment the authentic basis of his persuasion, Mr. Rigby poured forth his coarse volubility on the subject at several of the new clubs which he was getting up in order to revenge himself for having been black-balled at White's.

What with arrangements about Lord Monmouth's boroughs, and the lucky bottling of some claret which the Duke had imported on Mr. Rigby's recommendation, this distinguished gentleman contrived to pay almost hourly visits at Apsley House, and so bullied Tadpole and Taper that they scarcely dared address him. About four-and-twenty hours before the result, and when it was generally supposed that the Duke was in, Mr. Rigby, who had gone down to Windsor to ask his Majesty the date of some obscure historical incident, which Rigby, of course, very well knew, found that audiences were impossible, that Majesty was agitated, and

learned, from an humble but secure authority, that in spite of all his slashing articles, and Lucian Gay's parodies of the Irish melodies, Canning was to be Prime Minister.

This would seem something of a predicament! To common minds; there are no such things as scrapes for gentlemen with Mr. Rigby's talents for action. He had, indeed, in the world, the credit of being an adept in machinations, and was supposed ever to be involved in profound and complicated contrivances. This was quite a mistake. There was nothing profound about Mr. Rigby; and his intellect was totally incapable of devising or sustaining an intricate or continuous scheme. He was, in short, a man who neither felt nor thought; but who possessed, in a very remarkable degree, a restless instinct for adroit baseness. On the present occasion, he got into his carriage, and drove at the utmost speed from Windsor to the Foreign Office. The Secretary of State was engaged when he arrived; but Mr. Rigby would listen to no difficulties. He rushed up-stairs, flung open the door, and with agitated countenance, and eyes suffused with tears, threw himself into the arms of the astonished Mr. Canning.

"All is right," exclaimed the devoted Rigby, in broken tones; "I have convinced the King that the First Minister must be in the House of Commons. No one knows it but myself; but it is certain."

We have seen that at an early period of his career, Mr. Peel withdrew from official life. His course had been one of unbroken prosperity; the hero of the University had become the favourite of the House of Commons. His retreat, therefore, was not prompted by chagrin. Nor need it have been suggested by a calculating ambition, for the ordinary course of events was fast bearing to him all to which man could aspire. One might rather suppose, that he had already gained sufficient experience, perhaps in his Irish Secretaryship, to make him pause in that career of superficial success which education and custom had hitherto chalked out for him, rather than the creative energies of his own mind. A thoughtful intellect may have already detected elements in our social system which required a finer observation, and a more unbroken study, than the gyves and trammels of office would permit. He may have discovered that the representation of the University, looked upon in those days as the blue ribbon of the House of Commons, was a sufficient fetter without unnecessarily adding to its restraint. He may have wished to reserve himself for a happier occasion, and a more progressive period. He may have felt the strong necessity of arresting himself in his rapid career of felicitous routine, to survey his position in calmness, and to comprehend the stirring age that was approaching.

For that, he could not but be conscious that the education which he had consummated, however ornate and refined, was not sufficient. That age of economical statesmanship which Lord Shelburn had predicted in 1787, when he demolished, in the House of Lords, Bishop Watson and the Balance of Trade,—which Mr. Pitt had comprehended, and for which he was preparing the nation when the French Revolution diverted the public mind into a stronger and more turbulent current,—was again impending, while the intervening history of the country had been prolific in events which had aggravated the necessity of investigating the sources of the wealth of nations. The time had arrived when parliamentary pre-eminence could no longer be achieved or maintained by gorgeous abstractions borrowed from Burke, or shallow systems purloined from De Lolme, adorned with Horatian points, or varied with Virgilian passages. It was to be an age of abstruse disquisition, that required a compact and sinewy intellect, nurtured in a class of learning not yet honoured in colleges, and which might arrive at conclusions conflicting with predominant prejudices.

Adopting this view of the position of Mr. Peel, strengthened as it is by his early withdrawal for awhile from the direction of public affairs, it may not only be a charitable, but a true estimate of the motives which influenced him in his conduct towards Mr. Canning, to conclude that he was not guided in that transaction by the disingenuous rivalry usually imputed to him. His statement in Parliament of the determining circumstances of his conduct, coupled with his subsequent and almost immediate policy, may perhaps always leave this a painful and ambiguous passage in his career; but in passing judgment on public men, it behoves us ever to take large and extended views of their conduct; and previous incidents will often satisfactorily explain subsequent events, which, without their illustrating aid, are involved in misapprehension or mystery.

It would seem, therefore, that Sir Robert Peel, from an early period, meditated his emancipation from the political confederacy in which he was implicated, and that he has been continually baffled in this project. He broke loose from Lord Liverpool; he retired from Mr. Canning. Forced again into becoming the subordinate leader of the weakest government in parliamentary annals, he believed he had at length achieved his emancipation, when he declared to his late colleagues, after the overthrow of 1830, that he would never again accept a secondary position in office. But the Duke of Wellington was too old a tactician to lose so valuable an ally. So his Grace declared after the Reform Bill was passed, as its inevitable result, that thenceforth the Prime

Minister must be a member of the House of Commons; and this aphorism, cited as usual by the Duke's parasites as demonstration of his supreme sagacity, was a graceful mode of resigning the pre-eminence which had been productive of such great party disasters. It is remarkable that the party who devised and passed the Reform Bill, and who, in consequence, governed the nation for ten years, never once had their Prime Minister in the House of Commons: but that does not signify; the Duke's maxim is still quoted as an oracle almost equal in prescience to his famous query, "How is the King's government to be carried on?"—a question to which his Grace by this time has contrived to give a tolerably practical answer.

Sir Robert Peel, who had escaped from Lord Liverpool, escaped from Mr. Canning, escaped even from the Duke of Wellington in 1832, was at length caught in 1834; the victim of ceaseless intriguers, who neither comprehended his position, nor that of their country.

CHAPTER II.

BEAUMANOIR was one of those Palladian palaces, vast and ornate, such as the genius of Kent and Campbell delighted in at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Placed on a noble elevation, yet screened from the northern blast, its sumptuous front, connected with its far-spreading wings by Corinthian colonnades, was the boast and pride of the midland counties. The surrounding gardens, equalling in extent the size of ordinary parks, were crowded with temples dedicated to abstract virtues and to departed friends. Occasionally a triumphal arch celebrated a general whom the family still esteemed a hero; and sometimes a votive column commemorated the great statesman who had advanced the family a step in the peerage. Beyond the limits of this pleasance the hart and hind wandered in a wilderness abounding in ferny coverts and green and stately trees.

The noble proprietor of this demesne had many of the virtues of his class: a few of their failings. He had that public spirit which became his station. He was not one of those who avoided the exertions and the sacrifices which should be inseparable from high position, by the hollow pretext of a taste for privacy, and a devotion to domestic joys. He was munificent, tender and bounteous to the poor, and loved a flowing hospitality. A keen sportsman, he was not untinctured by letters, and had indeed a cultivated taste for the fine arts. Though an ardent politician, he was tolerant to adverse opinions, and full of amenity to his opponents. A firm supporter of the corn-laws, he never refused a

lease. Notwithstanding, there ran through his whole demeanour and the habit of his mind, a vein of native simplicity that was full of charm; his manner was finished. He never offended any one's self-love. His good breeding, indeed, sprang from the only sure source of gentle manners—a kind heart. To have pained others would have pained himself. Perhaps, too, this noble sympathy may have been in some degree prompted by the ancient blood in his veins, an accident of lineage rather rare with the English nobility. One could hardly praise him for the strong affections that bound him to his hearth, for fortune had given him the most pleasing family in the world; but, above all, a peerless wife.

The Duchess was one of those women who are the delight of existence. She was sprung from a house not inferior to that with which she had blended, and was gifted with that rare beauty which time ever spares, so that she seemed now only the elder sister of her own beautiful daughters. She, too, was distinguished by that perfect good breeding which is the result of nature and not of education: for it may be found in a cottage, and may be missed in a palace. 'Tis a genial regard for the feelings of others that springs from an absence of selfishness. The Duchess, indeed, was in every sense a fine lady; her manners were refined and full of dignity; but nothing in the world could have induced her to appear bored when another was addressing or attempting to amuse her. She was not one of those vulgar fine ladies who meet you one day with a vacant stare, as if unconscious of your existence, and address you on another in a tone of impertinent familiarity. Her temper, perhaps, was somewhat quick, which made this consideration for the feelings of others still more admirable, for it was the result of a strict moral discipline acting on a good heart. Although the best of wives and mothers, she had some charity for her neighbours.. Needing herself no indulgence, she could be indulgent ; and would by no means favour that strait-laced morality that would constrain the innocent play of the social body. She was accomplished, well read, and had a lively fancy. Add to this that sunbeam of a happy home, a gay and cheerful spirit in its mistress, and one might form some faint idea of this gracious personage.

The eldest son of this house was now on the Continent; of his two younger brothers, one was with his regiment, and the other was Coningsby's friend at Eton, our Henry Sydney. The two eldest daughters had just married, on the same day, and at the same altar; and the remaining one, Theresa, was still a child.

The Duke had occupied a chief post in the Household under the late administration, and his present guests chiefly consisted of

his former colleagues in office. There were several members of the late cabinet, several members for his Grace's late boroughs, looking very much like martyrs, full of suffering and of hope. Mr. Tadpole and Mr. Taper were also there; they too had lost their seats since 1832; but being men of business, and accustomed from early life to look about them, they had already commenced the combinations which on a future occasion were to bear them back to the assembly where they were so missed.

Taper had his eye on a small constituency which had escaped the fatal schedules, and where he had what they called a "connection;" that is to say, a section of the suffrages who had a lively remembrance of Treasury favours once bestowed by Mr. Taper, and who had not been so liberally dealt with by the existing powers. This connection of Taper was in time to leaven the whole mass of the constituent body, and make it rise in full rebellion against its present liberal representative, who, being one of a majority of three hundred, could get nothing when he called at Whitehall or Downing Street.

Tadpole, on the contrary, who was of a larger grasp of mind than Taper, with more of imagination and device but not so safe a man, was coquetting with a manufacturing town and a large constituency, where he was to succeed by the aid of the Wesleyans, of which pious body he had suddenly become a most fervent admirer. The great Mr. Rigby, too, was a guest, out of Parliament, nor caring to be in; but hearing that his friends had some hopes, he thought he would just come down to dash them.

The political grapes were sour for Mr. Rigby; a prophet of evil, he preached only mortification and repentance and despair to his late colleagues. It was the only satisfaction left Mr. Rigby, except assuring the Duke that the finest pictures in his gallery were copies, and recommending him to pull down Beaumanoir, and rebuild it on a design with which Mr. Rigby would furnish him.

The battue and the banquet were over; the ladies had withdrawn: and the butler placed a fresh bottle of claret on the table.

"And you really think you could give us a majority, Tadpole?" said the Duke.

Mr. Tadpole, with some ceremony, took a memorandum-book out of his pocket, amid the smiles and the faint well-bred merriment of his friends.

"Tadpole is nothing without his book," whispered Lord Fitz-Booby.

"It is here," said Mr. Tadpole, emphatically patting his volume, "a clear working majority of twenty-two."

"Near sailing that!" cried the Duke.

"A far better majority than the present Government have," said Mr. Tadpole.

"There is nothing like a good small majority," said Mr. Taper, "and a good registration."

"Ay! register, register, register!" said the Duke. "Those were immortal words!"

"I can tell your Grace three far better ones," said Mr. Tadpole, with a self-complacent air. "Object, object, object!"

"You may register, and you may object," said Mr. Rigby, "but you will never get rid of Schedule A and Schedule B."

"But who could have supposed two years ago that affairs would be in their present position?" said Mr. Taper, deferentially.

"I foretold it," said Mr. Rigby. "Every one knows that no government now can last twelve months."

"We may make fresh boroughs," said Taper. "We have reduced Shabbyton at the last registration under three hundred."

"And the Wesleyans!" said Tadpole. "We never counted on the Wesleyans!"

"I am told these Wesleyans are really a very respectable body," said Lord Fitz-Booby. "I believe there is no very material difference between their tenets and those of the Establishment. I never heard of them much till lately. We have too long confounded them with the mass of Dissenters, but their conduct at several of the latter elections prove that they are far from being unreasonable and disloyal individuals. When we come in, something should be done for the Wesleyans, eh, Rigby?"

"All that your Lordship can do for the Wesleyans is what they will very shortly do for themselves—appropriate a portion of the Church Revenues to their own use."

"Nay, nay," said Mr. Tadpole, with a chuckle, "I don't think we shall find the Church attacked again in a hurry. I only wish they would try! A good Church cry before a registration," he continued, rubbing his hands; "eh, my Lord, I think that would do."

"But how are we to turn them out?" said the Duke.

"Ah!" said Mr. Taper, "that is a great question."

"What do you think of a repeal of the Malt Tax?" said Lord Fitz-Booby. "They have been trying it on in ——shire, and I am told it goes down very well."

"No repeal of any tax," said Taper, sincerely shocked, and shaking his head; "and the Malt Tax of all others. I am all against that."

"It is a very good cry though, if there be no other," said Tadpole.

"I am all for a religious cry," said Taper. "It means nothing, and if successful, does not interfere with business when we are in."

"You will have religious cries enough in a short time," said Mr. Rigby, rather wearied of any one speaking but himself, and thereat he commenced a discourse, which was, in fact, one of his "slashing" articles in petto on Church Reform, and which abounded in parallels between the present affairs and those of the reign of Charles I. Tadpole, who did not pretend to know anything but the state of the registration, and Taper, whose political reading was confined to an intimate acquaintance with the Red Book and Beatson's Political Index, which he could repeat backwards, were silenced. The Duke, who was well instructed and liked to be talked to, sipped his claret, and was rather amused by Rigby's lecture, particularly by one or two statements characterised by Rigby's happy audacity, but which the Duke was too indolent to question. Lord Fitz-Booby listened with his mouth open, but rather bored. At length when there was a momentary pause, he said,—

"In my time, the regular thing was to move an amendment on the address."

"Quite out of the question," exclaimed Tadpole, with a scoff.

"Entirely given up," said Taper, with a sneer.

"If you will drink no more claret, we will go and hear some music," said the Duke.

CHAPTER III.

A BREAKFAST at Beaumanoir was a meal of some ceremony. Every guest was expected to attend, and at a somewhat early hour. Their host and hostess set them the example of punctuality. 'Tis an old form rigidly adhered to in some great houses, but, it must be confessed, does not contrast very agreeably with the easier arrangements of establishments of less pretension and of more modern order.

The morning after the dinner to which we have been recently introduced, there was one individual absent from the breakfast-table whose non-appearance could scarcely be passed over without notice; and several inquired with some anxiety, whether their host were indisposed.

"The Duke has received some letters from London which detain him," replied the Duchess. "He will join us."

"Your Grace will be glad to hear that your son Henry is very well," said Mr. Rigby; "I heard of him this morning. Harry

Coningsby enclosed me a letter for his grandfather, and tells me that he and Henry Sydney had just had a capital run with the King's hounds."

"It is three years since we have seen Mr. Coningsby," said the Duchess, "Once he was often here. He was a great favourite of mine. I hardly ever knew a more interesting boy."

"Yes, I have done a great deal for him," said Mr. Rigby. "Lord Monmouth is fond of him, and wishes that he should make a figure; but how any one is to distinguish himself now, I am really at a loss to comprehend."

"But are affairs so very bad?" said the Duchess, smiling. "I thought that we were all regaining our good sense and good temper."

"I believe all the good sense and all the good temper in England are concentrated in your Grace," said Mr. Rigby, very gallantly.

"I should be sorry to be such a monopolist. But Lord Fitz-Booby was giving me last night quite a glowing report of Mr. Tadpole's prospects for the nation. We were all to have our own again; and Percy to carry the county."

"My dear Madam, before twelve months are past, there will not be a county in England. Why should there be? If boroughs are to be disfranchised, why should not counties be destroyed?"

At this moment the Duke entered, apparently agitated. He bowed to his guests, and apologised for his unusual absence. "The truth is," he continued, "I have just received a very important despatch. An event has occurred which may materially affect affairs. Lord Spencer is dead!"

A thunderbolt in a summer sky, as Sir William Temple says, could not have produced a greater sensation. The business of the repast ceased in a moment. The knives and forks were suddenly silent. All was still.

"It is an immense event," said Tadpole.

"I don't see my way," said Taper.

"When did he die?" said Lord Fitz-Booby.

"I don't believe it," said Mr. Rigby.

"They have got their man ready," said Tadpole.

"It is impossible to say what will happen," said Taper.

"Now is the time for an amendment on the address," said Fitz-Booby.

"There are two reasons which convince me that Lord Spencer is not dead," said Mr. Rigby.

"I fear there is no doubt of it," said the Duke, shaking his head.

"Lord Althorp was the only man who could keep them together," said Lord Fitz-Booby.

"On the contrary," said Tadpole. "If I be right in my man, and I have no doubt of it, you will have a radical programme, and they will be stronger than ever."

"Do you think they can get the steam up again?" said Taper, musingly.

"They will bid high," replied Tadpole. "Nothing could be more unfortunate than this death. Things were going on so well and so quietly! The Wesleyans almost with us!"

"And Shabbyton too!" mournfully exclaimed Taper. "Another registration and quiet times, and I could have reduced the constituency to two hundred and fifty."

"If Lord Spencer had died on the 10th," said Rigby, "it must have been known to Henry Rivers. And I have a letter from Henry Rivers by this post. Now, Althorp is in Northamptonshire, mark that, and Northampton is a county——"

"My dear Rigby," said the Duke, "pardon me for interrupting you. Unhappily, there is no doubt Lord Spencer is dead, for I am one of his executors."

This announcement silenced even Mr. Rigby, and the conversation now entirely merged in speculations on what would occur. Numerous were the conjectures hazarded, but the prevailing impression was, that this unforeseen event might embarrass those secret expectations of Court succour in which a certain section of the party had for some time reason to indulge.

From the moment, however, of the announcement of Lord Spencer's death, a change might be visibly observed in the tone of the party at Beaumanoir. They became silent, moody, and restless. There seemed a general, though not avowed, conviction that a crisis of some kind or other was at hand. The post, too, brought letters every day from town teeming with fanciful speculations, and occasionally mysterious hopes.

"I kept this cover for Peel," said the Duke pensively, as he loaded his gun on the morning of the 14th. "Do you know, I was always against his going to Rome."

"It is very odd," said Tadpole, "but I was thinking of the very same thing."

"It will be fifteen years before England will see a Tory government," said Mr. Rigby, drawing his ramrod, "and then it will only last five months."

"Melbourne, Althorp, and Durham, all in the Lords," said Taper. "Three leaders! They must quarrel."

"If Durham come in, mark me, he will dissolve on Household Suffrage and the Ballot," said Tadpole.

"Not nearly so good a cry as Church," replied Taper.

"With the Malt Tax," said Tadpole. "Church, without the

Malt Tax, will not do against Household Suffrage and Ballot."

"Malt Tax is madness," said Taper. "A good farmer's friend cry without Malt Tax would work just as well."

"They will never dissolve," said the Duke. "They are so strong."

"They cannot go on with three hundred majority," said Taper. "Forty is as much as can be managed with open constituencies."

"If he had only gone to Paris instead of Rome!" said the Duke.

"Yes," said Mr. Rigby, "I could have written to him then by every post, and undeceived him as to his position."

"After all, he is the only man," said the Duke; "and I really believe the country thinks so."

"Pray, what is the country?" inquired Mr. Rigby. "The country is nothing; it is the constituency you have to deal with."

"And to manage them you must have a good cry," said Taper. "All now depends upon a good cry."

"So much for the science of politics," said the Duke, bringing down a pheasant. "How Peel would have enjoyed this cover!"

"He will have plenty of time for sporting during his life," said Mr. Rigby.

On the evening of the 15th of November, a despatch arrived at Beaumanoir, informing his Grace that the King had dismissed the Whig Ministry, and sent for the Duke of Wellington. Thus the first agitating suspense was over; to be succeeded, however, by expectation still more anxious. It was remarkable that every individual suddenly found that he had particular business in London which could not be neglected. The Duke very properly pleaded his executorial duties; but begged his guests on no account to be disturbed by his inevitable absence. Lord Fitz-Booby had just received a letter from his daughter, who was extremely indisposed, at Brighton, and he was most anxious to reach her. Tadpole had to receive deputations from Wesleyans, and well-registered boroughs anxious to receive well-principled candidates. Taper was off to get the first job at the contingent Treasury, in favour of the Borough of Shabbyton. Mr. Rigby alone was silent; but he quietly ordered a post-chaise at daybreak, and long before his fellow guests were roused from their slumbers, he was halfway to London, ready to give advice either at the pavilion, or at Apsley House.

CHAPTER IV.

Although it is far from improbable that, had Sir Robert Peel been in England in the autumn of 1834, the Whig government would not have been dismissed; nevertheless, whatever may now be the opinion of the policy of that measure; whether it be looked on as a premature movement which necessarily led to the compact reorganization of the Liberal party, or as a great stroke of State, which, by securing at all events a dissolution of the Parliament of 1832, restored the healthy balance of parties in the Legislature—questions into which we do not now wish to enter—it must be generally admitted, that the conduct of every individual eminently concerned in that great historical transaction was characterised by the rarest and most admirable quality of public life—moral courage. The Sovereign who dismissed a Ministry apparently supported by an overwhelming majority in the Parliament and the nation, and called to his councils the absent chief of a parliamentary section, scarcely numbering at that moment one hundred and forty individuals, and of a party in the country supposed to be utterly discomfited by a recent revolution; the two ministers who in this absence provisionally administered the affairs of the kingdom in the teeth of an enraged and unscrupulous Opposition, and perhaps themselves not sustained by a profound conviction, that the arrival of their expected leader would convert their provisional into a permanent position; above all, the statesman who accepted the great charge at a time and under circumstances which marred probably the deep projects of his own prescient sagacity and maturing ambition; were all men gifted with a high spirit of enterprise, and animated by that active fortitude which is the soul of free governments.

It was a lively season, that winter of 1834! What hopes, what fears, and what bets! From the day on which Mr. Hudson was to arrive at Rome, to the election of the Speaker, not a contingency that was not the subject of a wager! The people sprang up like mushrooms; town suddenly became full. Everybody who had been in office, and everybody who wished to be in office; everybody who had ever had anything, and everybody who ever expected to have anything—were alike visible. All of course by mere accident; one might meet the same men regularly every day for a month, who were only "passing through town."

Now was the time for men to come forward who had never despaired of their country. True, they had voted for the Reform Bill, but that was to prevent a revolution. And now they were quite ready to vote against the Reform Bill, but this was to pre-

vent a dissolution. These are the true patriots, whose confidence in the good sense of their countrymen and in their own selfishness is about equal. In the meantime, the hundred and forty threw a grim glance on the numerous waiters on Providence, and amiable trimmers, who affectionately inquired every day when news might be expected of Sir Robert. Though too weak to form a government, and having contributed in no wise by their exertions to the fall of the late, the cohort of Parliamentary Tories felt all the alarm of men who have accidentally stumbled on some treasure-trove, at the suspicious sympathy of new allies. But, after all, who were to form the government, and what was the government to be? Was it to be a Tory government, or an Enlightened-Spirit-of-the-Age, Liberal-Moderate-Reform government; was it to be a government of high philosophy or of low practice; of principle or of expediency; of great measures or of little men? A government of statesmen or of clerks? Of Humbug or of Humdrum? Great questions these, but unfortunately there was nobody to answer them. They tried the Duke; but nothing could be pumped out of him. All that he knew, which he told in his curt, husky manner, was, that he had to carry on the King's government. As for his solitary colleague, he listened and smiled, and then in his musical voice asked them questions in return, which is the best possible mode of avoiding awkward inquiries. It was very unfair this; for no one knew what tone to take; whether they should go down to their public dinners and denounce the Reform Act or praise it; whether the Church was to be re-modelled or only admonished; whether Ireland was to be conquered or conciliated.

"This can't go on much longer," said Taper to Tadpole, as they reviewed together their electioneering correspondence on the 1st of December; "we have no cry."

"He is half way by this time," said Tadpole; "send an extract from a private letter to the Standard, dated Augsburg, and say he will be here in four days."

At last he came; the great man in a great position, summoned from Rome to govern England. The very day that he arrived he had his audience with the King.

It was two days after this audience; the town, though November, in a state of great excitement; clubs crowded, not only morning-rooms, but halls and staircases swarming with members eager to give and to receive rumours equally vain; streets lined with cabs and chariots, grooms and horses; it was two days after this audience that Mr. Ormsby, celebrated for his political dinners, gave one to a very numerous party. Indeed his saloons to-day,

during the half-hour of gathering which precedes dinner, offered in the various groups, the anxious countenances, the inquiring voices, and the mysterious whispers, rather the character of an Exchange or Bourse than the tone of a festive society.

Here might be marked a murmuring knot of greyheaded privy-councillors, who had held fat offices under Perceval and Liverpool, and who looked back to the Reform Act as to a hideous dream; there some middle-aged aspirants might be observed who had lost their seats in the convulsions, but who flattered themselves they had done something for the party in the interval, by spending nothing except their breath in fighting hopeless boroughs, and occasionally publishing a pamphlet, which really produced less effect than chalking the walls. Light as air, and proud as a young peacock, tripped on his toes a young Tory, who had contrived to keep his seat in a Parliament where he had done nothing, but who thought an Under Secretaryship was now secure, particularly as he was the son of a noble Lord who had also in a public capacity plundered and blundered in the good old time. The true political adventurer, who with dull desperation had stuck at nothing, had never neglected a treasury note, had been present at every division, never spoke when he was asked to be silent, and was always ready on any subject when they wanted him to open his mouth; who had treated his leaders with servility even behind their backs, and was happy for the day if a future Secretary of the Treasury bowed to him; who had not only discountenanced discontent in the party, but had regularly reported in strict confidence every instance of insubordination which came to his knowledge; might there too be detected under all the agonies of the crisis; just beginning to feel the dread misgiving, whether being a slave and a sneak were sufficient qualifications for office, without family or connection. Poor fellow! half the industry he had wasted on his cheerless craft might have made his fortune in some decent trade!

In dazzling contrast with these throes of low ambition, were some brilliant personages who had just scampered up from Melton, thinking it probable that Sir Robert might want some moral lords of the bed-chamber. Whatever may have been their private fears or feelings, all however seemed smiling and significant; as if they knew something if they chose to tell it, and that something very much to their own satisfaction. The only grave countenance that was occasionally ushered into the room belonged to some individual whose destiny was not in doubt, and who was already practising the official air that was in future to repress the familiarity of his former fellow-strugglers.

"Do you hear anything?" said a great noble, who wanted some-

thing in the general scramble, but what he knew not; only he had a vague feeling he ought to have something, having made such great sacrifices.

"There is a report that Clifford is to be Secretary to the Board of Control," said Mr. Earwig, whose whole soul was in this subaltern arrangement, of which the Minister of course had not even thought; "but I cannot trace it to any authority."

"I wonder who will be their Master of the Horse," said the great noble, loving gossip though he despised the gossiper.

"Clifford has done nothing for the party," said Mr. Earwig.

"I dare say Rambrooke will have the Buckhounds," said the great noble, musingly.

"Your Lordship has not heard Clifford's name mentioned?" continued Mr. Earwig.

"I should think they had not come to that sort of thing," said the great noble, with ill-disguised contempt. "The first thing after the Cabinet is formed is the Household: the things you talk of are done last;" and he turned upon his heel, and met the imperturbable countenance and clear sarcastic eye of Lord Eskdale.

"You have not heard anything?" asked the great noble of his brother patrician.

"Yes, a great deal since I have been in this room; but unfortunately it is all untrue."

"There is a report that Rambrooke is to have the Buckhounds; but I cannot trace it to any authority."

"Pooh!" said Lord Eskdale.

"I don't see that Rambrooke should have the Buckhounds any more than anybody else. What sacrifice has he made?"

"Past sacrifices are nothing," said Lord Eskdale. "Present sacrifices are the thing we want:—men who will sacrifice their principles, and join us."

"You have not heard Rambrooke's name mentioned?"

"When a Minister has no Cabinet, and only one hundred and forty supporters in the House of Commons, he has something else to think of than places at Court," said Lord Eskdale, as he slowly turned away to ask Lucian Gay whether it were true that Jenny Colon was coming over.

Shortly after this, Henry Sydney's father, who dined with Mr. Ormsby, drew Lord Eskdale into a window, and said in an under tone,—

"So there is to be a kind of programme: something is to be written."

"Well, we want a cue," said Lord Eskdale. "I heard of this last night: Rigby has written something."

The Duke shook his head.

"No; Peel means to do it himself."

But at this moment Mr. Ormsby begged his Grace to lead them to dinner.

"Something is to be written." It is curious to recall the vague terms in which the first projection of documents, that are to exercise a vast influence on the course of affairs or the minds of nations, is often mentioned. This "something to be written" was written; and speedily; and has ever since been talked of.

We believe we may venture to assume that at no period during the movements of 1834-5 did Sir Robert Peel ever believe in the success of his administration. Its mere failure could occasion him little dissatisfaction; he was compensated for it by the noble opportunity afforded to him for the display of those great qualities, both moral and intellectual, which the swaddling-clothes of a routine prosperity had long repressed, but of which his opposition to the Reform Bill had given to the nation a very significant intimation. The brief administration elevated him in public opinion, and even in the eye of Europe; and it is probable that a much longer term of power would not have contributed more to his fame.

The probable effect of the premature effort of his party on his future position as a Minister was, however, far from being so satisfactory. At the lowest ebb of his political fortunes, it cannot be doubted that Sir Robert Peel looked forward, perhaps through the vista of many years, to a period when the national mind, arrived by reflection and experience at certain conclusions, would seek in him a powerful expositor of its convictions. His time of life permitted him to be tranquil in adversity, and to profit by its salutary uses. He would then have acceded to power as the representative of a Creed, instead of being the leader of a Confederacy, and he would have been supported by earnest and enduring enthusiasm, instead of by that churlish sufferance which is the result of a supposed balance of advantages in his favour. This is the consequence of the tactics of those short-sighted intriguers, who persisted in looking upon a revolution as a mere party struggle; and would not permit the mind of the nation to work through the inevitable phases that awaited it. In 1834, England, though frightened at the reality of Reform, still adhered to its phrases; it was inclined, as practical England, to maintain existing institutions; but, as theoretical England, it was suspicious that they were indefensible.

No one had arisen either in Parliament, the Universities, or the Press, to lead the public mind to the investigation of principles; and not to mistake, in their reformations, the corruption

of practice for fundamental ideas. It was this perplexed, ill-informed, jaded, shallow generation, repeating cries which they did not comprehend, and wearied with the endless ebullitions of their own barren conceit, that Sir Robert Peel was summoned to govern. It was from such materials, ample in quantity, but in all spiritual qualities most deficient; with great numbers, largely acred, consoled up to their chins, but without knowledge, genius, thought, truth, or faith, that Sir Robert Peel was to form a "great Conservative party on a comprehensive basis." That he did this like a dexterous politician, who can deny? Whether he realised those prescient views of a great statesman in which he had doubtless indulged, and in which, though still clogged by the leadership of 1834, he may yet find fame for himself and salvation for his country, is altogether another question. His difficult attempt was expressed in an address to his constituents, which now ranks among state papers. We shall attempt briefly to consider it with the impartiality of the future.

CHAPTER V.

THE TAMWORTH MANIFESTO of 1834 was an attempt to construct a party without principles; its basis therefore was necessarily Latitudinarianism; and its inevitable consequence has been Political Infidelity.

At an epoch of political perplexity and social alarm, the confederation was convenient, and was calculated by aggregation to encourage the timid and confused. But when the perturbation was a little subsided, and men began to inquire why they were banded together, the difficulty of defining their purpose proved that the league, however respectable, was not a party. The leaders indeed might profit by their eminent position to obtain power for their individual gratification, but it was impossible to secure their followers that which, after all, must be the great recompense of a political party, the putting in practice of their opinions; for they had none.

There was indeed a considerable shouting about what they called Conservative principles; but the awkward question naturally arose, what will you conserve? The prerogatives of the Crown, provided they are not exercised; the independence of the House of Lords, provided it is not asserted; the Ecclesiastical estate, provided it is regulated by a commission of laymen. Everything, in short, that is established, as long as it is a phrase and not a fact.

In the meantime, while forms and phrases are religiously che-

rished in order to make the semblance of a creed, the rule of practice is to bend to the passion or combination of the hour. Conservatism assumes in theory that everything established should be maintained; but adopts in practice that everything that is established is indefensible. To reconcile this theory and this practice, they produce what they call "the best bargain;" some arrangement which has no principle and no purpose; except to obtain a temporary lull of agitation, until the mind of the Conservatives, without a guide and without an aim, distracted, tempted, and bewildered, is prepared for another arrangement, equally statesmanlike with the preceding one.

Conservatism was an attempt to carry on affairs by substituting the fulfilment of the duties of office for the performance of the functions of government; and to maintain this negative system by the mere influence of property, reputable private conduct, and what are called good connections. Conservatism discards Prescription, shrinks from Principle, disavows Progress; having rejected all respect for Antiquity, it offers no redress for the Present, and makes no preparation for the Future. It is obvious that for a time, under favourable circumstances, such a confederation might succeed; but it is equally clear, that on the arrival of one of those critical conjunctures that will periodically occur in all states, and which such an unimpassioned system is even calculated ultimately to create, all power of resistance will be wanting: the barren curse of political infidelity will paralyse all action; and the Conservative Constitution will be discovered to be a Caput Mortuum.

CHAPTER VI

In the meantime, after dinner, Tadpole and Taper, who were among the guests of Mr. Ormsby, withdrew to a distant sofa, out of earshot, and indulged in confidential talk.

"Such a strength in debate was never before found on a Treasury bench," said Mr. Tadpole; "the other side will be dumbfounded."

"And what do you put our numbers at now?" inquired Mr. Taper.

"Would you take fifty-five for our majority?" rejoined Mr. Tadpole.

"It is not so much the tail they have, as the excuse their junction will be for the moderate, sensible men to come over," said Taper. "Our friend Sir Everard for example, it would settle him."

"He is a solemn impostor," rejoined Mr. Tadpole; "but he is a baronet and a county member, and very much looked up to by

the Wesleyans. The other men, I know, have refused him a peerage."

"And we might hold out judicious hopes," said Taper.

"No one can do that better than you," said Tadpole. "I am apt to say too much about those things."

"I make it a rule never to open my mouth on such subjects," said Taper. "A nod or a wink will speak volumes. An affectionate pressure of the hand will sometimes do a great deal; and I have promised many a peerage without committing myself, by an ingenious habit of deference which cannot be mistaken by the future noble."

"I wonder what they will do with Rigby," said Tadpole.

"He wants a good deal," said Taper.

"I tell you what, Mr. Taper; the time is gone by when a Marquess of Monmouth was Letter A, No. 1."

"Very true, Mr. Tadpole. A wise man would do well now to look to the great middle class, as I said the other day to the electors of Shabbyton."

"I had sooner be supported by the Wesleyans," said Mr. Tadpole, "than by all the marquesses in the peerage."

"At the same time," said Mr. Taper, "Rigby is a considerable man. If we want a slashing article——"

"Pooh!" said Mr. Tadpole. "He is quite gone by. He takes three months for his slashing articles. Give me a man who can write a leader. Rigby can't write a leader."

"Very few can," said Mr. Taper. "However, I don't think much of the press. Its power is gone by. They overdid it."

"There is Tom Chudleigh," said Tadpole. "What is he to have?"

"Nothing, I hope," said Taper. "I hate him. A coxcomb! cracking his jokes and laughing at us."

"He has done a good deal for the party, though," said Tadpole. "That, to be sure, is only an additional reason for throwing him over, as he is too far committed to venture to oppose us. But I am afraid from something that dropped to-day, that Sir Robert thinks he has claims."

"We must stop them," said Taper, growing pale. "Fellows like Chudleigh, when they once get in, are always in one's way. I have no objection to young noblemen being put forward, for they are preferred so rapidly, and then their fathers die, that in the long run they do not practically interfere with us."

"Well, his name was mentioned," said Tadpole. "There is no concealing that."

"I will speak to Earwig," said Taper. "He shall just drop into Sir Robert's ear by chance, that Chudleigh used to quiz him

in the smoking-room. Those little bits of information do a great deal of good."

"Well, I leave him to you," said Tadpole. "I am heartily with you in keeping out all fellows like Chudleigh. They are very well for opposition; but in office we don't want wits."

"And when shall we have the answer from Knowsley?" inquired Taper. "You anticipate no possible difficulty?"

"I tell you it is 'carte blanche,'" replied Tadpole. "Four places in the Cabinet. Two secretaryships at the least. Do you happen to know any gentlemen of your acquaintance, Mr. Taper, who refuses Secretaryships of State so easily, that you can for an instant doubt of the present arrangement?"

"I know none indeed," said Mr. Taper, with a grim smile.

"The thing is done," said Mr. Tadpole.

"And now for our cry," said Mr. Taper.

"It is not a Cabinet for a good cry," said Tadpole; "but then, on the other hand, it is a Cabinet that will sow dissension in the opposite ranks, and prevent them having a good cry."

"Ancient institutions and modern improvements, I suppose, Mr. Tadpole?"

"Ameliorations is the better word; ameliorations. Nobody knows exactly what it means."

"We go strong on the Church?" said Mr. Taper.

"And no repeal on the Malt Tax; you were right, Taper. It can't be listened to for a moment."

"Something might be done with prerogative," said Mr. Taper; "the King's constitutional choice."

"Not too much," replied Mr. Tadpole. "It is a raw time yet for prerogative."

"Ah! Tadpole," said Mr. Taper, getting a little maudlin; "I often think, if the time should ever come, when you and I should be joint Secretaries of the Treasury!"

"We shall see, we shall see. All we have to do is to get into Parliament, work well together, and keep other men down."

"We will do our best," said Taper. "A dissolution you hold inevitable?"

"How are you and I to get into Parliament if there be not one? We must make it inevitable. I tell you what, Taper, the lists must prove a dissolution inevitable. You understand me? If the present Parliament goes on, where shall we be? We shall have new men cropping up every session."

"True, terribly true," said Mr. Taper. "That we should ever live to see a Tory government again! We have reason to be very thankful."

"Hush!" said Mr. Tadpole. "The time has gone by for Tory

governments; what the country requires is a sound Conservative government."

"A sound Conservative government," said Taper, musingly. "I understand: Tory men and Whig measures."

CHAPTER VII.

AMID the contentions of party, the fierce struggles of ambition, and the intricacies of political intrigue, let us not forget our Eton friends. During the period which elapsed from the failure of the Duke of Wellington to form a government in 1832, to the failure of Sir Robert Peel to carry on a government in 1835, the boys had entered, and advanced in youth.. The ties of friendship which then united several of them had only been confirmed by continued companionship. Coningsby and Henry Sydney, and Buckhurst and Vere, were still bound together by entire sympathy, and by the affection of which sympathy is the only sure spring. But their intimacies had been increased by another familiar friend. There had risen up between Coningsby and Millbank mutual sentiments of deep, and even ardent, regard. Acquaintance had developed the superior qualities of Millbank. His thoughtful and inquiring mind, his inflexible integrity, his stern independence, and yet the engaging union of extreme tenderness of heart with all this strength of character, had won the goodwill, and often excited the admiration, of Coningsby. Our hero, too, was gratified by the affectionate deference that was often shown to him by one who condescended to no other individual; he was proud of having saved the life of a member of their community whom masters and boys alike considered; and he ended by loving the being on whom he had conferred a great obligation.

The friends of Coningsby, the sweet-tempered and intelligent Henry Sydney, the fiery and generous Buckhurst, and the calm and sagacious Vere, had ever been favourably inclined to Millbank, and had they not been, the example of Coningsby would soon have influenced them. He had obtained over his intimates the ascendant power, which is the destiny of genius. Nor was the submission of such spirits to be held cheap. Although they were willing to take the colour of their minds from him, they were in intellect and attainments, in personal accomplishments and general character, the leaders of the school; an authority not to be won from five hundred high-spirited boys without the possession of great virtues and great talents.

As for the dominion of Coningsby himself, it was not limited to the immediate circle of his friends. He had become the hero of

Eton; the being of whose existence everybody was proud, and in whose career every boy took an interest. They talked of him, they quoted him, they imitated him. Fame and power are the objects of all men. Even their partial fruition is gained by very few; and that too at the expense of social pleasure, health, conscience, life. Yet what power of manhood in passionate intenseness, appealing at the same time to the subject and the votary, can rival that which is exercised by the idolised chieftain of a great public school? What fame of after days equals the rapture of celebrity, that thrills the youthful poet, as in tones of rare emotion he recites his triumphant verses amid the devoted plaudits of the flower of England? That's fame, that's power; real, unquestioned, undoubted, catholic. Alas! the schoolboy when he becomes a man, finds that power, even fame, like everything else, is an affair of party.

Coningsby liked very much to talk politics with Millbank. He heard things from Millbank which were new to him. Himself, as he supposed, a high Tory, which he was according to the revelation of the Rigbys, he was also sufficiently familiar with the hereditary tenets of his Whig friend, Lord Vere. Politics had as yet appeared to him a struggle whether the country was to be governed by Whig nobles or Tory nobles; and he thought it very unfortunate that he should probably have to enter life with his friends out of power, and his family boroughs destroyed. But in conversing with Millbank, he heard for the first time of influential classes in the country, who were not noble, and were yet determined to acquire power. And although Millbank's views, which were of course merely caught up from his father, without the intervention of his own intelligence, were doubtless crude enough, and were often very acutely canvassed and satisfactorily demolished by the clever prejudices of another school, which Coningsby had at command, still they were, unconsciously to the recipient, materials for thought, and insensibly provoked in his mind a spirit of inquiry into political questions, for which he had a predisposition.

It may be said, indeed, that generally among the upper boys there might be observed at this time, at Eton, a reigning inclination for political discussion. The school truly had at all times been proud of its statesmen and its parliamentary heroes, but this was merely a superficial feeling in comparison with the sentiment which now first became prevalent. The great public questions that were the consequence of the Reform of the House of Commons, had also agitated their young hearts. And especially the controversies that were now rife respecting the nature and character of ecclesiastical establishments, wonderfully addressed them-

selves to their excited intelligence. They read their newspapers with a keen relish, canvassed debates, and criticised speeches; and although in their debating society, which had been instituted more than a quarter of a century, discussion on topics of the day was prohibited, still by fixing on periods of our history when affairs were analogous to the present, many a youthful orator contrived very effectively to reply to Lord John, or to refute the fallacies of his rival.

As the political opinions predominant in the school were what in ordinary parlance are styled Tory, and indeed were far better entitled to that glorious epithet than the flimsy shifts which their fathers were professing in Parliament and the country; the formation and the fall of Sir Robert Peel's government had been watched by Etonians with great interest, and even excitement. The memorable efforts which the Minister himself made, supported only by the silent votes of his numerous adherents, and contending alone against the multiplied assaults of his able and determined foes, with a spirit equal to the great occasion, and with resources of parliamentary contest which seemed to increase with every exigency; these great and unsupported struggles alone were calculated to gain the sympathy of youthful and generous spirits. The assault on the revenues of the Church; the subsequent crusade against the House of Lords; the display of intellect and courage exhibited by Lord Lyndhurst in that assembly, when all seemed cowed and faint-hearted; all these were incidents or personal traits apt to stir the passions, and create in breasts not yet schooled to repress emotion, a sentiment even of enthusiasm. It is the personal that interests mankind, that fires their imagination, and wins their hearts. A cause is a great abstraction, and fit only for students; embodied in a party, it stirs men to action; but place at the head of that party a leader who can inspire enthusiasm, he commands the world. Divine faculty! Rare and incomparable privilege! A parliamentary leader who possesses it, doubles his majority; and he who has it not, may shroud himself in artificial reserve, and study with undignified arrogance an awkward haughtiness, but he will nevertheless be as far from controlling the spirit as from captivating the hearts of his sullen followers.

However, notwithstanding this very general feeling at Eton, in 1835, in favour of "Conservative principles," which was, in fact, nothing more than a confused and mingled sympathy with some great political truths, which were at the bottom of every boy's heart, but nowhere else; and with the personal achievements and distinction of the chieftains of the party;—when all this hubbub had subsided, and retrospection, in the course of a year, had exer-

cised its moralising influence over the more thoughtful part of the nation, inquiries, at first very faint and unpretending, and confined indeed for a long period to very limited, though inquisitive, circles, began gently to circulate—what Conservative principles were.

These inquiries, urged indeed with a sort of hesitating scepticism, early reached Eton. They came, no doubt, from the Universities. They were of a character, however, far too subtile and refined to exercise any immediate influence over the minds of youth. To pursue them required much previous knowledge and habitual thought. They were not yet publicly prosecuted by any school of politicians, or any section of the public press. They had not a local habitation or a name. They were whispered in conversation by a few. A tutor would speak of them in an esoteric vein to a favourite pupil, in whose abilities he had confidence, and whose future position in life would afford him the opportunity of influencing opinion. Among others, they fell upon the ear of Coningsby. They were addressed to a mind which was prepared for such researches.

There is a library at Eton formed by the boys and governed by the boys; one of those free institutions which are the just pride of that noble school, which shows the capacity of the boys for self-government, and which has sprung from the large freedom that has been wisely conceded them, the prudence of which confidence has been proved by their rarely abusing it. This library has been formed by subscriptions of the present and still more by the gifts of old Etonians. Among the honoured names of these donors may be remarked those of the Grenvilles and Lord Wellesley; nor should we forget George IV., who enriched the collection with a magnificent copy of the Delphin Classics. The Institution is governed by six directors, the three first Collegers and the three first Oppidans for the time being; and the subscribers are limited to the one hundred senior members of the school.

It is only to be regretted that the collection is not so extensive as it is interesting and choice. Perhaps its existence is not so generally known as it deserves to be. One would think that every Eton man would be as proud of his name being registered as a donor in the Catalogue of this Library, as a Venetian of his name being inscribed in the Golden Book. Indeed an old Etonian, who still remembers with tenderness the sacred scene of youth, could scarcely do better than build a Gothic apartment for the reception of the collection. It cannot be doubted that the Provost and fellows would be gratified in granting a piece of ground for the purpose.

Great were the obligations of Coningsby to this Eton Library.

It introduced him to that historic lore, that accumulation of facts and incidents illustrative of political conduct, for which he had imbibed an early relish. His study was especially directed to the annals of his own country, in which youth, and not youth alone, is frequently so deficient. This collection could afford him Clarendon and Burnet, and the authentic volumes of Coxe: these were rich materials for one anxious to be versed in the great parliamentary story of his country. During the last year of his stay at Eton, when he had completed his eighteenth year, Coningsby led a more retired life than previously; he read much, and pondered with all the pride of acquisition over his increasing knowledge.

And now the hour has come when this youth is to be launched into a world more vast than that in which he has hitherto sojourned, yet for which this microcosm has been no ill preparation. He will become more wise; will he remain as generous? His ambition may be as great; will it be as noble? What, indeed, is to be the future of this existence that is now to be sent forth into the great aggregate of entities? Is it an ordinary organization that will jostle among the crowd, and be jostled? Is it a finer temperament, susceptible of receiving the impressions and imbibing the inspirations of superior, yet sympathising spirits? Or is it a primordial and creative mind; one that will say to his fellows, "Behold, God has given me thought; I have discovered truth, and you shall believe?"

The night before Coningsby left Eton, alone in his room, before he retired to rest, he opened the lattice and looked for the last time upon the landscape before him; the stately keep of Windsor, the bowery meads of Eton, soft in the summer moon and still in the summer night. He gazed upon them; his countenance had none of the exultation, that under such circumstances might have distinguished a more careless glance, eager for fancied emancipation and passionate for a novel existence. Its expression was serious, even sad; and he covered his brow with his hand.

END OF BOOK II.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

THERE are few things more full of delight and splendour, than to travel during the heat of a refulgent summer in the green district of some ancient forest.

In one of our midland counties there is a region of this character, to which, during a season of peculiar lustre, we would introduce the reader.

It was a fragment of one of those vast sylvan tracts wherein Norman kings once hunted, and Saxon outlaws plundered; and although the plough had for centuries successfully invaded brake and bower, the relics retained all their original character of wildness and seclusion. Sometimes the green earth was thickly studded with groves of huge and vigorous oaks, intersected with those smooth and sunny glades, that seem as if they must be cut for dames and knights to saunter on. Then again the undulating ground spread on all sides, far as the eye could range, covered with copse and fern of immense growth. Anon you found yourself in a turfy wilderness, girt in apparently by dark woods. And when you had wound your way a little through this gloomy belt, the landscape, still strictly sylvan, would beautifully expand with every combination and variety of woodland; while in its centre, the wild-fowl covered the waters of a lake, and the deer basked on the knolls that abounded on its banks.

It was in the month of August, some six or seven years ago, that a traveller on foot, touched, as he emerged from the dark wood, by the beauty of this scene, threw himself under the shade of a spreading tree, and stretched his limbs on the turf for enjoyment rather than repose. The sky was deep-coloured and without a cloud, save here and there a minute, sultry, burnished vapour, almost as glossy as the heavens. Everything was still as it was bright; all seemed brooding and basking; the bee upon its wing was the only stirring sight, and its song the only sound.

The traveller fell into a reverie. He was young, and therefore his musings were of the future. He had felt the pride of learning, so ennobling to youth; he was not a stranger to the stirring impulses of a high ambition, though the world to him

was as yet only a world of books, and all that he knew of the schemes of statesmen and the passions of the people, were to be found in their annals. Often had his fitful fancy dwelt with fascination on visions of personal distinction, of future celebrity, perhaps even of enduring fame. But his dreams were of another colour now. The surrounding scene, so fair, so still, and sweet —so abstracted from all the tumult of the world, its strife, its passions, and its cares—had fallen on his heart with its soft and subduing spirit—had fallen on a heart still pure and innocent —the heart of one who, notwithstanding all his high resolves and daring thoughts, was blessed with that tenderness of soul which is sometimes linked with an ardent imagination and a strong will. The traveller was an orphan—more than that, a solitary orphan. The sweet sedulousness of a mother's love, a sister's mystical affection, had not cultivated his early susceptibility. No soft pathos of expression had appealed to his childish ear. He was alone, among strangers calmly and coldly kind. It must indeed have been a truly gentle disposition that could have withstood such hard neglect. All that he knew of the power of the softer passions might be found in the fanciful and romantic annals of schoolboy friendship.

And those friends too, so fond, so sympathising, so devoted, where were they now? Already they were dispersed; the first great separation of life had been experienced; the former schoolboy had planted his foot on the threshold of manhood. True, many of them might meet again; many of them the University must again unite, but never with the same feelings. The space of time, passed in the world before they again met, would be an age of sensation, passion, experience to all of them. They would meet again with altered mien, with different manners, different voices. Their eyes would not shine with the same light; they would not speak the same words. The favourite phrases of their intimacy, the mystic sounds that spoke only to their initiated ear, they would be ashamed to use them. Yes, they might meet again, but the gushing and secret tenderness was gone for ever!

Nor could our pensive youth conceal it from himself that it was affection, and mainly affection, that had bound him to these dear companions. They could not be to him what he had been to them. His had been the inspiring mind that had guided their opinions, formed their tastes, directed the bent and tenor of their lives and thoughts. Often, indeed, had he needed, sometimes he had even sighed for, the companionship of an equal or superior mind—one who, by the comprehension of his thought, and the richness of his knowledge, and the advantage of his experience, might strengthen and illuminate and guide his obscure

or hesitating or unpractised intelligence. He had scarcely been fortunate in this respect, and he deeply regretted it; for he was one of those who was not content with excelling in his own circle, if he thought there was one superior to it. Absolute, not relative distinction, was his noble aim.

Alone, in a lonely scene, he doubly felt the solitude of his life and mind. His heart and his intellect seemed both to need a companion. Books, and action, and deep thought, might in time supply the want of that intellectual guide; but for the heart, where was he to find solace?

Ah! if she would but come forth from that shining lake like a beautiful Ondine! Ah, if she would but step out from the green shade of that secret grove like a Dryad of sylvan Greece! O mystery of mysteries, when the youth dreams his first dream over some imaginary heroine!

Suddenly the brooding wild-fowl rose from the bosom of the lake, soared in the air, and, uttering mournful shrieks, whirled in agitated tumult. The deer started from their knolls, no longer sunny, stared around, and rushed into the woods. Coningsby raised his eyes from the turf on which they had been long fixed in abstraction, and he observed that the azure sky had vanished, a thin white film had suddenly spread itself over the heavens, and the wind moaned with a sad and fitful gust.

He had some reason to believe that on the other side of the opposite wood the forest was intersected by a public road, and that there were some habitations. Immediately rising, he descended at a rapid pace into the valley, passed the lake, and then struck into the ascending wood on the bank opposite to that on which he had mused away some precious time.

The wind howled, the branches of the forest stirred, and sent forth sounds like an incantation. Soon might be distinguished the various voices of the mighty trees, as they expressed their terror or their agony. The oak roared, the beech shrieked, the elm sent forth its deep and long-drawn groan; while ever and anon, amid a momentary pause, the passion of the ash was heard in moans of thrilling anguish.

Coningsby hurried on, the forest became less close. All that he aspired to was to gain more open country. Now he was in a rough flat land, covered only here and there with some dwarf underwood; the horizon bounded at no great distance by a barren hill of moderate elevation. He gained its height with ease. He looked over a vast open country like a wild common; in the extreme distance hills covered with woods; the plain intersected by two good roads; the sky entirely clouded, but in the distance black as ebony.

A place of refuge was at hand:—screened from his first glance

by some elm-trees, the ascending smoke now betrayed a roof, which Coningsby reached before the tempest broke. The forest-inn was also a farm-house. There was a comfortable-enough looking kitchen; but the ingle nook was full of smokers, and Coningsby was glad to avail himself of the only private room for the simple meal which they offered him—only eggs and bacon; but very welcome to a pedestrian, and a hungry one.

As he stood at the window of his little apartment, watching the large drops that were the heralds of a coming hurricane, and waiting for his repast, a flash of lightning illumined the whole country, and a horseman at full speed, followed by his groom, galloped up to the door.

The remarkable beauty of the animal so attracted Coningsby's attention, that it prevented him catching even a glimpse of the rider, who rapidly dismounted and entered the inn. The host shortly after came in and asked Coningsby whether he had any objection to a gentleman, who was driven there by the storm, sharing his room until it subsided. The consequence of the immediate assent of Coningsby was, that the landlord retired and soon returned, ushering in an individual, who, though perhaps ten years older than Coningsby, was still, according to Hippocrates, in the period of lusty youth. He was above the middle height, and of a distinguished air and figure; pale, with an impressive brow, and dark eyes of great intelligence.

"I am glad that we have both escaped the storm," said the stranger; "and I am greatly indebted to you for your courtesy." He slightly and graciously bowed, as he spoke in a voice of remarkable clearness; and his manner, though easy, was touched with a degree of dignity that was engaging.

"The inn is a common home," replied Coningsby, returning his salute.

"And free from cares," added the stranger. Then, looking through the window, he said, "A strange storm this. I was sauntering in the sunshine, when suddenly I found I had to gallop for my life. 'Tis more like a white squall in the Mediterranean than anything else."

"I never was in the Mediterranean," said Coningsby. "There is nothing I should like so much as to travel."

"You are travelling," rejoined his companion. "Every moment is travel, if understood."

"Ah! but the Mediterranean!" exclaimed Coningsby. "What would I not give to see Athens!"

"I have seen it," said the stranger, slightly shrugging his shoulders; "and more wonderful things. Phantoms and spectres! The Age of Ruins is past. Have you seen Manchester?"

"I have seen nothing," said Coningsby; "this is my first wandering. I am about to visit a friend who lives in this county, and I have sent on my baggage as I could. For myself, I determined to trust to a less common-place conveyance."

"And seek adventures," said the stranger, smiling. "Well, according to Cervantes, they should begin in an inn."

"I fear that the age of adventures is past, as well as that of ruins," replied Coningsby.

"Adventures are to the adventurous," said the stranger.

At this moment, a pretty serving-maid entered the room. She laid the dapper-cloth and arranged the table with a self-possession quite admirable. She seemed unconscious that any being was in the chamber except herself, or that there were any other duties to perform in life beyond filling a salt-cellar or folding a napkin.

"She does not even look at us," said Coningsby, when she had quitted the room; "and I dare say is only a prude."

"She is calm," said the stranger, "because she is mistress of her subject; 'tis the secret of self-possession. She is here as a Duchess at court."

They brought in Coningsby's meal, and he invited the stranger to join him. The invitation was accepted with cheerfulness.

"'Tis but simple fare," said Coningsby, as the maiden uncovered the still hissing bacon and the eggs, that looked like tufts of primroses.

"Nay, a national dish," said the stranger, glancing quickly at the table, "whose fame is a proverb. And what more should we expect under a simple roof! How much better than an omelette or a greasy olla, that they would give us in a posada! 'Tis a wonderful country this England! What a napkin! How spotless! And so sweet; I declare 'tis a perfume. There is not a princess throughout the South of Europe served with the cleanliness that meets us in this cottage."

"An inheritance from our Saxon fathers?" said Coningsby. "I apprehend the northern nations have a greater sense of cleanliness —of propriety—of what we call comfort?"

"By no means," said the stranger; "the East is the land of the Bath. Moses and Mahomet made cleanliness religion."

"You will let me help you?" said Coningsby, offering him a plate which he had filled.

"I thank you," said the stranger, "but it is one of my bread days. With your permission this shall be my dish;" and he cut from the large loaf a supply of crusts

"'Tis but unsavoury fare after a gallop," said Coningsby.

"Ah! you are proud of your bacon and your eggs," said the stranger, smiling, "but I love corn and wine. They are our chief

and our oldest luxuries. Time has brought us substitutes, but how inferior! Man has deified corn and wine! but not even the Chinese or the Irish have raised temples to tea and potatoes."

"But Ceres without Bacchus," said Coningsby, "how does that do? Think you, under this roof, we could invoke the god?"

"Let us swear by his body that we will try," said the stranger.

Alas! the landlord was not a priest to Bacchus. But then these inquiries led to the finest perry in the world. The young men agreed they had seldom tasted anything more delicious; they sent for another bottle. Coningsby, who was much interested by his new companion, enjoyed himself amazingly.

A cheese, such as Derby alone can produce, could not induce the stranger to be even partially inconstant to his crusts. But his talk was as vivacious as if the talker had been stimulated by the juices of the finest banquet. Coningsby had never met or read of any one like this chance companion. His sentences were so short, his language so racy, his voice rang so clear, his elocution was so complete. On all subjects his mind seemed to be instructed, and his opinions formed. He flung out a result in a few words; he solved with a phrase some deep problem that men muse over for years. He said many things that were strange, yet they immediately appeared to be true. Then, without the slightest air of pretention or parade, he seemed to know everybody as well as everything. Monarchs, statesmen, authors, adventurers, of all descriptions and of all climes—if their names occurred in their conversation, he described them in an epigrammatic sentence, or revealed their precise position, character, calibre, by a curt dramatic trait. All this, too, without any excitement of manner; on the contrary, with repose amounting almost to nonchalance. If his address had any fault in it, is was rather a deficiency of earnestness. A slight spirit of mockery played over his speech even when you deemed him most serious; you were startled by his sudden transitions from profound thought to poignant sarcasm. A very singular freedom from passion and prejudice on every topic on which they treated, might be some compensation for this want of earnestness, perhaps was its consequence. Certainly it was difficult to ascertain his precise opinions on many subjects, though his manner was frank even to abandonment. And yet throughout his whole conversation, not a stroke of egotism, not a word, not a circumstance escaped him, by which you could judge of his position or purposes in life. As little did he seem to care to discover those of his companion. He did not by any means monopolise the conversation. Far from it; he continually asked questions, and while he received answers, or had engaged his fellow-traveller in any expositions of his opinion or feelings, he listened with a

serious and fixed attention, looking Coningsby in the face with a steadfast glance.

"I perceive," said Coningsby, pursuing a strain of thought which the other had indicated, "that you have great confidence in the influence of individual character. I also have some confused persuasions of that kind. But it is not the Spirit of the Age."

"The age does not believe in great men, because it does not possess any," replied the stranger. "The Spirit of the Age is the very thing that a great man changes."

"But does he not rather avail himself of it?" inquired Coningsby.

"Parvenus do," rejoined his companion; "but not prophets, great legislators, great conquerors. They destroy and they create."

"But are these times for great legislators and great conquerors?" urged Coningsby.

"When were they wanted more?" asked the stranger. "From the throne to the hovel all call for a guide. You give monarchs constitutions to teach them sovereignty, and nations Sunday-schools to inspire them with faith."

"But what is an individual," exclaimed Coningsby, "against a vast public opinion?"

"Divine," said the stranger. "God made man in His own image; but the Public is made by Newspapers, Members of Parliament, Excise Officers, Poor-law Guardians. Would Philip have succeeded if Epaminondas had not been slain? And if Philip had not succeeded? Would Prussia have existed had Frederick not been born? And if Frederick had not been born? What would have been the fate of the Stuarts if Prince Henry had not died, and Charles I., as was intended, had been Archbishop of Canterbury?"

"But when men are young they want experience," said Coningsby; "and when they have gained experience, they want energy."

"Great men never want experience," said the stranger.

"But everybody says that experience——"

"Is the best thing in the world—a treasure for you, for me, for millions. But for a creative mind, less than nothing. Almost everything that is great has been done by youth."

"It is at least a creed flattering to our years," said Coningsby, with a smile.

"Nay," said the stranger; "for life in general there is but one decree. Youth is a blunder; Manhood a struggle; old Age a regret. Do not suppose," he added, smiling, "that I hold that youth is genius; all that I say is, that genius, when young, is divine. Why, the greatest captains of ancient and modern times

both conquered Italy at five-and-twenty! Youth, extreme youth, overthrew the Persian Empire. Don John of Austria won Lepanto at twenty-five—the greatest battle of modern time; had it not been for the jealousy of Philip, the next year he would have been Emperor of Mauritania. Gaston de Foix was only twenty-two when he stood a victor on the plain of Ravenna. Every one remembers Condé and Rocroy at the same age. Gustavus Adolphus died at thirty-eight. Look at his captains: that wonderful Duke of Weimar, only thirty-six when he died. Banier himself, after all his miracles, died at forty-five. Cortes was little more that thirty when he gazed upon the golden cupolas of Mexico. When Maurice of Saxony died at thirty-two, all Europe acknowledged the loss of the greatest captain and the profoundest statesman of the age. Then there is Nelson, Clive—but these are warriors, and perhaps you may think there are greater things than war. I do not: I worship the Lord of Hosts. But take the most illustrious achievements of civil prudence. Innocent III., the greatest of the Popes, was the despot of Christendom at thirty-seven. John de Medici was a Cardinal at fifteen, and, according to Guicciardini, he baffled with his statecraft Ferdinand of Arragon himself. He was Pope as Leo X. at thirty-seven. Luther robbed even him of his richest province at thirty-five. Take Ignatius Loyola and John Wesley, they worked with young brains. Ignatius was only thirty when he made his pilgrimage and wrote the 'Spiritual Exercises.' Pascal wrote a great work at sixteen, and died at thirty-seven—the greatest of Frenchmen.

"Ah! that fatal thirty-seven, which reminds me of Byron, greater even as a man than a writer. Was it experience that guided the pencil of Raphael when he painted the palaces of Rome? He, too, died at thirty-seven. Richelieu was Secretary of State at thirty-one. Well then, there was Bolingbroke and Pitt, both ministers before other men left off cricket. Grotius was in great practice at seventeen, and Attorney-General at twenty-four. And Acquaviva—Acquaviva was General of the Jesuits, ruled every cabinet in Europe, and colonised America before he was thirty-seven. What a career!" exclaimed the stranger, rising from his chair and walking up and down the room; "the secret sway of Europe! That was indeed a position! But it is needless to multiply instances! The history of Heroes is the history of Youth."

"Ah!" said Coningsby, "I should like to be a great man!"

The stranger threw at him a scrutinising glance. His countenance was serious. He said in a voice of almost solemn melody,—

"Nurture your mind with great thoughts. To believe in the heroic makes heroes."

"You seem to me a hero," said Coningsby, in a tone of real feeling, which, half ashamed of his emotion, he tried to turn into playfulness.

"I am, and must ever be," said the stranger, "but a dreamer of dreams." Then going towards the window, and changing into a familiar tone, as if to divert the conversation, he added, "What a delicious afternoon! I look forward to my ride with delight. You rest here?"

"No; I go on to Nottingham, where I shall sleep."

"And I in the opposite direction." And he rang the bell, and ordered his horses.

"I long to see your mare again," said Coningsby. "She seemed to me so beautiful."

"She is not only of pure race," said the stranger, "but of the highest and rarest breed in Arabia. Her name is 'the Daughter of the Star.' She is a foal of that famous mare, which belonged to the Prince of the Wahabees; and to possess which, I believe, was one of the principal causes of war between that tribe and the Egyptians. The Pacha of Egypt gave her to me, and I would not change her for her statue in pure gold, even carved by Lysippus. Come round to the stable and see her."

They went out together. It was a soft sunny afternoon; the air fresh from the rain, but mild and exhilarating.

The groom brought forth the mare. "The Daughter of the Star" stood before Coningsby with her sinewy shape of matchless symmetry; her burnished skin, black mane, legs like those of an antelope, her little ears, dark speaking eye, and tail worthy of a Pacha. And who was her master, and whither was she about to take him?

Coningsby was so naturally well-bred, that we may be sure it was not curiosity; no, it was a finer feeling that made him hesitate and think a little, and then say,—

"I am sorry to part."

"I also," said the stranger. "But life is constant separation."

"I hope we may meet again," said Coningsby.

"If our acquaintance be worth preserving," said the stranger, "you may be sure it will not be lost."

"But mine is not worth preserving," said Coningsby, earnestly. "It is yours that is the treasure. You teach me things of which I have long mused."

The stranger took the bridle of "the Daughter of the Star," and turning round with a faint smile, extended his hand to his companion.

"Your mind at least is nurtured with great thoughts," said Coningsby; "your actions should be heroic."

"Action is not for me," said the stranger; "I am of that faith that the Apostles professed before they followed their master."

He vaulted into his saddle, the "Daughter of the Star" bounded away as if she scented the air of the Desert from which she and her rider had alike sprung, and Coningsby remained in profound meditation.

CHAPTER II.

The day after his adventure at the Forest Inn, Coningsby arrived at Beaumanoir. It was several years since he had visited the family of his friend, who were indeed also his kin; and in his boyish days had often proved that they were not unmindful of the affinity. This was a visit that had been long counted on, long promised, and which a variety of circumstances had hitherto prevented. It was to have been made by the schoolboy: it was to be fulfilled by the man. For no less a character could Coningsby under any circumstances now consent to claim, since he was closely verging to the completion of his nineteenth year; and it appeared manifest that if it were his destiny to do anything great, he had but few years to wait before the full development of his power. Visions of Gastons de Foix and Maurices of Saxony, statesmen giving up cricket to govern nations, beardless Jesuits plunged in profound abstraction in omnipotent cabinets, haunted his fancy from the moment he had separated from his mysterious and deeply interesting companion. To nurture his mind with great thoughts had ever been Coningsby's inspiring habit. Was it also destined that he should achieve the heroic?

There are some books, when we close them—one or two in the course of our life—difficult as it may be to analyse or ascertain the cause,—our minds seem to have made a great leap. A thousand obscure things receive light; a multitude of indefinite feelings are determined. Our intellect grasps and grapples with all subjects with a capacity, a flexibility, and a vigour, before unknown to us. It masters questions hitherto perplexing, which are not even touched or referred to in the volume just closed. What is this magic? It is the spirit of the supreme author, by a magnetic influence blending with our sympathising intelligence, that directs and inspires it. By that mysterious sensibility we extend to questions which he has not treated, the same intellectual force which he has exercised over those which he has expounded. His genius for a time remains in us. 'Tis the same with human beings as with books. All of us encounter, at least once in our life, some individual who utters words that make us think for ever. There are men whose phrases are oracles; who condense in a sentence

the secrets of life; who blurt out an aphorism that forms a character or illustrates an existence. A great thing is a great book; but greater than all is the talk of a great man!

And what is a great man? Is it a Minister of State? Is it a victorious General? A gentleman in the Windsor uniform? A Field Marshal covered with stars? Is it a Prelate, or a Prince? A King, even an Emperor? It may be all these; yet these, as we must all daily feel, are not necessarily great men. A great man is one who affects the mind of his generation: whether he be a monk in his cloister agitating Christendom, or a monarch crossing the Granicus, and giving a new character to the Pagan world.

Our young Coningsby reached Beaumanoir in a state of meditation. He also desired to be great. Not from the restless vanity that sometimes impels youth to momentary exertion, by which they sometimes obtain a distinction as evanescent as their energy. The ambition of our hero was altogether of a different character. It was, indeed, at present not a little vague, indefinite, hesitating, inquiring, sometimes desponding. What were his powers? what should be his aim? were often to him, as to all young aspirants, questions infinitely perplexing and full of pain. But on the whole, there ran through his character, notwithstanding his many dazzling qualities and accomplishments, and his juvenile celebrity, which has spoiled so much promise, a vein of grave simplicity that was the consequence of an earnest temper, and of an intellect that would be content with nothing short of the profound.

His was a mind that loved to pursue every question to the centre. But it was not a spirit of scepticism that impelled this habit; on the contrary, it was the spirit of faith. Coningsby found that he was born in an age of infidelity in all things, and his heart assured him that a want of faith was a want of nature. But his vigorous intellect could not take refuge in that maudlin substitute for belief which consists in a patronage of fantastic theories. He needed that deep and enduring conviction that the heart and the intellect, feeling and reason united, can alone supply. He asked himself why governments were hated, and religions despised? Why loyalty was dead, and reverence only a galvanised corpse?

These were indeed questions that had as yet presented themselves to his thought in a very crude and imperfect form; but their very occurrence showed the strong predisposition of his mind. It was because he had not found guides among his elders, that his thoughts had been turned to the generation that he himself represented. The sentiment of veneration was so developed in his nature, that he was exactly the youth that would have hung with enthusiastic humility on the accents of some sage of old in the groves of Academus, or the porch of Zeno. But as yet he had

found age only perplexed and desponding; manhood only callous and desperate. Some thought that systems would last their time; others, that something would turn up. His deep and pious spirit recoiled with disgust and horror from such lax, chance-medley maxims, that would, in their consequences, reduce man to the level of the brutes. Notwithstanding a prejudice which had haunted him from his childhood, he had, when the occasion offered, applied to Mr. Rigby for instruction, as one distinguished in the republic of letters, as well as the realm of politics; who assumed the guidance of the public mind, and, as the phrase runs, was looked up to. Mr. Rigby listened at first to the inquiries of Coningsby, urged, as they ever were, with a modesty and deference which do not always characterise juvenile investigations, as if Coningsby were speaking to him of the unknown tongues. But Mr. Rigby was not a man who ever confessed himself at fault. He caught up something of the subject as our young friend proceeded, and was perfectly prepared, long before he had finished, to take the whole conversation into his own hands.

Mr. Rigby began by ascribing everything to the Reform Bill, and then referred to several of his own speeches on Schedule A. Then he told Coningsby that want of religious Faith was solely occasioned by want of churches; and want of Loyalty, by George IV. having shut himself up too much at the Cottage in Windsor Park, entirely against the advice of Mr. Rigby. He assured Coningsby that the Church Commission was operating wonders, and that with private benevolence (he had himself subscribed 1000*l.*, for Lord Monmouth) we should soon have churches enough. The great question now was their architecture. Had George IV. lived, all would have been right. They would have been built on the model of the Budhist pagoda. As for Loyalty, if the present King went regularly to Ascot races, he had no doubt all would go right. Finally, Mr. Rigby impressed on Coningsby to read the Quarterly Review with great attention; and to make himself master of Mr. Wordy's History of the late War in twenty volumes, a capital work, which proves that Providence was on the side of the Tories.

Coningsby did not apply to Mr. Rigby again; but worked on with his own mind, coming often enough to sufficiently crude conclusions, and often very much perplexed and harassed. He tried occasionally his inferences on his companions, who were intelligent and full of fervour. Millbank was more than this. He was of a very thoughtful mood—had also caught up from a new school some principles, which were materials for discussion. One way or other, however, before he quitted Eton there prevailed among this circle of friends, the initial idea doubtless emanating from

Coningsby, an earnest, though a rather vague, conviction that the present state of feeling in matters both civil and religious was not healthy; that there must be substituted for this latitudinarianism something sound and deep, fervent and well defined, and that the priests of this new faith must be found among the New Generation; so that when the bright-minded rider of "the Daughter of the Star" descanted on the influence of individual character, of great thoughts and heroic actions, and the divine power of youth and genius, he touched a string that was the very heart-chord of his companion, who listened with fascinated enthusiasm, as he introduced him to his gallery of inspiring models.

Coningsby arrived at Beaumanoir at a season when men can neither hunt nor shoot. Great internal resources should be found in a country family under such circumstances. The Duke and Duchess had returned from London only a few days with their daughter, who had been presented this year. They were all glad to find themselves again in the country, which they loved and which loved them. One of their sons-in-law and his wife, and Henry Sydney, completed the party.

There are few conjunctures in life of a more startling interest, than to meet the pretty little girl that we have gambolled with in our boyhood, and to find her changed in the lapse of a very few years, which in some instances may not have brought a corresponding alteration in our own appearance, into a beautiful woman. Something of this flitted over Coningsby's mind, as he bowed, a little agitated from his surprise, to Lady Theresa Sydney. All that he remembered had prepared him for beauty; but not for the degree or character of beauty that he met. It was a rich, sweet face, with blue eyes and dark lashes, and a nose that we have no epithet in English to describe, but which charmed in Roxalana. Her brown hair fell over her white and well-turned shoulders in long and luxuriant tresses. One has met something as brilliant and dainty in a medallion of old Sèvres, or amid the terraces and gardens of Watteau.

Perhaps Lady Theresa, too, might have welcomed him with more freedom had his appearance also more accorded with the image which he had left behind. Coningsby was a boy then, as we described him in our first chapter. Though only nineteen now, he had attained his full stature, which was above the middle height, and time had fulfilled that promise of symmetry in his figure, and grace in his mien, then so largely intimated. Time, too, which had not yet robbed his countenance of any of its physical beauty, had strongly developed the intellectual charm by which it had ever been distinguished. As he bowed lowly before the Duchess and her daughter, it would have been difficult to image a

youth of a mien more prepossessing and a manner more finished.

A manner that was spontaneous; nature's pure gift, the reflex of his feeling. No artifice prompted that profound and polished homage. Not one of those influences, the aggregate of whose sway produces, as they tell us, the finished gentleman, had ever exercised its beneficent power on our orphan, and not rarely forlorn, Coningsby. No clever and refined woman, with her quick perception, and nice criticism that never offends our self-love, had ever given him that education that is more precious than Universities. The mild suggestions of a sister, the gentle raillery of some laughing cousin, are also advantages not always appreciated at the time, but which boys, when they have become men, often think over with gratitude, and a little remorse at the ungracious spirit in which they were received. Not even the dancing-master had afforded his mechanical aid to Coningsby, who, like all Eton boys of this generation, viewed that professor of accomplishments with frank repugnance. But even in the boisterous life of school, Coningsby, though his style was free and flowing, was always well-bred. His spirit recoiled from that gross familiarity that is the characteristic of modern manners, and which would destroy all forms and ceremonies merely because they curb and control their own coarse convenience and ill-disguised selfishness. To women, however, Coningsby instinctively bowed, as to beings set apart for reverence and delicate treatment. Little as his experience was of them, his spirit had been fed with chivalrous fancies, and he entertained for them all the ideal devotion of a Surrey or a Sydney. Instructed, if not learned, as books and thought had already made him in men, he could not conceive that there were any other women in the world than fair Geraldines and Countesses of Pembroke.

There was not a country-house in England that had so completely the air of habitual residence as Beaumanoir. It is a charming trait, and very rare. In many great mansions everything is as stiff, formal, and tedious, as if your host were a Spanish grandee in the days of the Inquisition. No ease, no resources; the passing life seems a solemn spectacle in which you play a part. How delightful was the morning-room at Beaumanoir; from which gentlemen were not excluded with that assumed suspicion that they can never enter it but for felonious purposes. Such a profusion of flowers! Such a multitude of books! Such a various prodigality of writing materials! So many easy chairs too, of so many shapes; each in itself a comfortable home; yet nothing crowded. Woman alone can organise a drawing-room; man succeeds sometimes in a library. And the ladies' work! How graceful they look bending

over their embroidery-frames, consulting over the arrangement of a group, or the colour of a flower. The panniers and fanciful baskets, overflowing with variegated worsted, are gay and full of pleasure to the eye, and give an air of elegant business that is vivifying. Even the sight of employment interests.

Then the morning costume of English women is itself a beautiful work of art. At this period of the day they can find no rivals in other climes. The brilliant complexions of the daughters of the north dazzle in daylight; the illumined saloon levels all distinctions. One should see them in their well-fashioned muslin dresses. What matrons, and what maidens! Full of graceful dignity, fresher than the morn! And the married beauty in her little lace cap. Ah, she is a coquette! A charming character at all times; in a country-house an invaluable one.

A coquette is a being who wishes to please. Amiable being! If you do not like her, you will have no difficulty in finding a female companion of a different mood. Alas! coquettes are but too rare. 'Tis a career that requires great abilities, infinite pains, a gay and airy spirit. 'Tis the coquette that provides all amusement; suggests the riding-party, plans the pic-nic, gives and guesses charades, acts them. She is the stirring element amid the heavy congeries of social atoms; the soul of the house, the salt of the banquet. Let any one pass a very agreeable week, or it may be ten days, under any roof, and analyse the cause of his satisfaction, and one might safely make a gentle wager that his solution would present him with the frolic phantom of a coquette.

"It is impossible that Mr. Coningsby can remember me!" said a clear voice; and he looked round, and was greeted by a pair of sparkling eyes and the gayest smile in the world.

It was Lady Everingham, the Duke's married daughter.

CHAPTER III.

"And you walked here!" said Lady Everingham to Coningsby when the stir of arranging themselves at dinner had subsided. "Only think, papa, Mr. Coningsby walked here! I also am a great walker."

"I had heard much of the forest," said Coningsby.

"Which I am sure did not disappoint you," said the Duke.

"But forests without adventures!" said Lady Everingham, a little shrugging her pretty shoulders.

"But I had an adventure," said Coningsby.

"Oh! tell it us by all means!" said the Lady, with great animation. "Adventures are my weakness. I have had more adven-

tures than any one. Have I not had, Augustus?" she added, addressing her husband.

"But you make everything out to be an adventure, Isabel," said Lord Everingham. "I dare say that Mr. Coningsby's was more substantial." And looking at our young friend, he invited him to inform them.

"I met a most extraordinary man," said Coningsby.

"It should have been a heroine," exclaimed Lady Everingham.

"Do you know anybody in this neighbourhood who rides the finest Arab in the world?" asked Coningsby. "She is called 'the Daughter of the Star,' and was given to her rider by the Pacha of Egypt."

"This is really an adventure," said Lady Everingham, interested.

"The Daughter of the Star!" said Lady Theresa. "What a pretty name! Percy has a horse called 'Sunbeam.'"

"A fine Arab, the finest in the world!" said the Duke, who was very fond of horses. "Who can it be?"

"Can you throw any light on this, Mr. Lyle?" asked the Duchess of a young man who sat next her.

He was a neighbour who had joined their dinner-party. Eustace Lyle, a Roman Catholic, and the richest commoner in the county; for he had succeeded to a great estate early in his minority, which had only this year terminated.

"I certainly do not know the horse," said Mr. Lyle; "but if Mr. Coningsby would describe the rider, perhaps——"

"He is a man something under thirty," said Coningsby, "pale, with dark hair. We met in a sort of forest-inn during a storm. A most singular man! Indeed, I never met any one who seemed to me so clever, or to say such remarkable things."

"He must have been the spirit of the storm," said Lady Everingham.

"Charles Verney has a great deal of dark hair," said Lady Theresa. "But then he is anything but pale, and his eyes are blue."

"And certainly he keeps his wonderful things for your ear, Theresa," said her sister.

"I wish that Mr. Coningsby would tell us some of the wonderful things he said," said the Duchess, smiling.

"Take a glass of wine first with my mother, Coningsby," said Henry Sydney, who had just finished helping them all to fish.

Coningsby had too much tact to be entrapped into a long story. He already regretted that he had been betrayed into any allusion to the stranger. He had a wild, fanciful notion, that their meeting ought to have been preserved as a sacred secret. But he

had been impelled to refer to it in the first instance by the chance observation of Lady Everingham; and he had pursued his remark from the hope that the conversation might have led to the discovery of the unknown. When he found that his inquiry in this respect was unsuccessful, he was willing to turn the conversation. In reply to the Duchess, then, he generally described the talk of the stranger as full of lively anecdote and epigrammatic views of life; and gave them, for example, a saying of a very illustrious foreign Prince, which was quite new and pointed, and which Coningsby told well. This led to a new train of discourse. The Duke also knew this illustrious foreign Prince, and told another story of him; and Lord Everingham had played whist with this illustrious foreign Prince very often at the Travellers', and this led to a third story; none of them too long. Then Lady Everingham came in again, and sparkled very agreeably. She, indeed, sustained throughout dinner the principal weight of the conversation; but, as she asked questions of everybody, all seemed to contribute. Even the voice of Mr. Lyle, who was rather bashful, was occasionally heard in reply. Coningsby, who had at first unintentionally taken a more leading part than he aspired to, would have retired into the background for the rest of the dinner, but Lady Everingham continually signalled him out for her questions, and as she sat opposite to him, he seemed the person to whom they were principally addressed.

At length the ladies rose to retire. A very great personage in a foreign, but not remote country, once mentioned to the writer of these pages that he ascribed the superiority of the English in political life, in their conduct of public business and practical views of affairs, in a great measure to "that little half-hour" that separates, after dinner, the dark from the fair sex. The writer humbly submitted, that if the period of disjunction were strictly limited to a "little half-hour," its salutary consequences for both sexes need not be disputed, but that in England the "little half-hour" was too apt to swell into a term of far more awful character and duration. Lady Everingham was a disciple of the "very little half-hour" school; for, as she gaily followed her mother, she said to Coningsby, whose gracious lot it was to usher them from the apartment,—

"Pray do not be too long at the Board of Guardians to-day."

These were prophetic words; for no sooner were they all again seated, than the Duke, filling his glass and pushing the claret to Coningsby, observed,—

"I suppose Lord Monmouth does not trouble himself much about the New Poor Law?"

"Hardly," said Coningsby. "My grandfather's frequent ab-

sence from England, which his health, I believe, renders quite necessary, deprives him of the advantage of personal observation on a subject, than which I can myself conceive none more deeply interesting."

"I am glad to hear you say so," said the Duke, "and it does you great credit, and Henry too, whose attention, I observe, is directed very much to these subjects. In my time, the young men did not think so much of such things, and we suffer consequently. By the bye, Everingham, you, who are a Chairman of a Board of Guardians, can give me some information. Supposing a case of out-door relief——"

"I could not suppose anything so absurd," said the son-in-law.

"Well," rejoined the Duke, "I know your views on that subject, and it certainly is a question on which there is a good deal to be said. But would you under any circumstances give relief out of the Union, even if the parish were to save a considerable sum?"

"I wish I knew the Union where such a system was followed," said Lord Everingham; and his Grace seemed to tremble under his son-in-law's glance.

The Duke had a good heart, and not a bad head. If he had not made in his youth so many Latin and English verses, he might have acquired considerable information, for he had a natural love of letters, though his pack were the pride of England, his barrel seldom missed, and his fortune on the turf, where he never betted, was a proverb. He was good, and he wished to do good; but his views were confused from want of knowledge, and his conduct often inconsistent because a sense of duty made him immediately active; and he often acquired in the consequent experience a conviction exactly contrary to that which had prompted his activity.

His Grace had been a great patron and a zealous administrator of the New Poor Law. He had been persuaded that it would elevate the condition of the labouring class. His son-in-law, Lord Everingham, who was a Whig, and a clear-headed, cold-blooded man, looked upon the New Poor Law as another Magna Charta. Lord Everingham was completely master of the subject. He was himself the Chairman of one of the most considerable Unions of the kingdom. The Duke, if he ever had a misgiving, had no chance in argument with his son-in-law. Lord Everingham overwhelmed him with quotations from Commissioners' rules and Sub-commissioners' reports, statistical tables, and references to dietaries. Sometimes with a strong case, the Duke struggled to make a fight; but Lord Everingham, when he was at fault for a reply, which was very rare, upbraided his father-in-law with the abuses

of the old system, and frightened him with visions of rates exceeding rentals.

Of late, however, a considerable change had taken place in the Duke's feelings on this great question. His son Henry entertained strong opinions upon it, and had combated his father with all the fervour of a young votary. A victory over his Grace, indeed, was not very difficult. His natural impulse would have early enlisted him on the side, if not of opposition to the new system, at least of critical suspicion of its spirit and provisions. It was only the statistics and sharp acuteness of his son-in-law that had, indeed, ever kept him to his colours. Lord Henry would not listen to statistics, dietary tables, Commissioners' rules, Sub-commissioners' reports. He went far higher than his father; far deeper than his brother-in-law. He represented to the Duke that the order of the peasantry was as ancient, legal, and recognised an order as the order of the nobility; that it had distinct rights and privileges, though for centuries they had been invaded and violated, and permitted to fall into desuetude. He impressed upon the Duke that the parochial constitution of this country was more important than its political constitution; that it was more ancient, more universal in its influence; and that this parochial constitution had already been shaken to its centre by the New Poor Law. He assured his father that it would never be well for England until this order of the peasantry was restored to its pristine condition; not merely in physical comfort, for that must vary according to the economical circumstances of the time, like that of every class; but to its condition in all those moral attributes which make a recognised rank in a nation; and which, in a great degree, are independent of economics, manners, customs, ceremonies, rights, and privileges.

"Henry thinks," said Lord Everingham, "that the people are to be fed by dancing round a May-pole."

"But will the people be more fed because they do not dance round a May-pole?" urged Lord Henry.

"Obsolete customs!" said Lord Everingham.

"And why should dancing round a May-pole be more obsolete than holding a Chapter of the Garter?" asked Lord Henry.

The Duke, who was a blue ribbon, felt this a home thrust. "I must say," said his Grace, "that I for one deeply regret that our popular customs have been permitted to fall so into desuetude."

"The Spirit of the Age is against such things," said Lord Everingham.

"And what is the Spirit of the Age?" asked Coningsby.

"The Spirit of Utility," said Lord Everingham.

"And you think then that ceremony is not useful?" urged Coningsby, mildly.

"It depends upon circumstances," said Lord Everingham. "There are some ceremonies, no doubt, that are very proper, and of course very useful. But the best thing we can do for the labouring classes is to provide them with work."

"But what do you mean by the labouring classes, Everingham?" asked Lord Henry. "Lawyers are a labouring class, for instance, and by the bye sufficiently provided with work. But would you approve of Westminster Hall being denuded of all its ceremonies?"

"And the long vacation being abolished?" added Coningsby.

"Theresa brings me terrible accounts of the sufferings of the poor about us," said the Duke, shaking his head.

"Women think everything to be suffering!" said Lord Everingham.

"How do you find them about you, Mr. Lyle?" continued the Duke.

"I have revived the monastic customs at St. Geneviève," said the young man, blushing very much. "There is an almsgiving twice a-week."

"I am sure I wish I could see the labouring classes happy," said the Duke.

"Oh! pray do not use, my dear father, that phrase, the labouring classes!" said Lord Henry. "What do you think, Coningsby, the other day we had a meeting in this neighbourhood to vote an agricultural petition that was to comprise all classes. I went with my father, and I was made chairman of the committee to draw up the petition. Of course, I described it as the petition of the nobility, clergy, gentry, yeomanry, and peasantry of the County of ——; and, could you believe it, they struck out *peasantry* as a word no longer used, and inserted *labourers*."

"What can it signify," said Lord Everingham, "whether a man be called a labourer or a peasant?"

"And what can it signify," said his brother-in-law, "whether a man be called Mr. Howard or Lord Everingham?"

They were the most affectionate family under this roof of Beaumanoir, and of all members of it, Lord Henry the sweetest tempered, and yet it was astonishing what sharp skirmishes every day arose between him and his brother-in-law, during "that little half-hour," that forms so happily the political character of the nation. The Duke, who from experience felt that a guerilla movement was impending, asked his guests whether they would take any more claret; and on their signifying their dissent, moved an adjournment to the ladies.

They joined the ladies in the music-room. Coningsby, not experienced in feminine society, and who found a little difficulty from want of practice in maintaining conversation, though he was very desirous of succeeding, was delighted with Lady Everingham, who, instead of requiring to be amused, amused him; and suggested so many subjects, and glanced at so many topics, that there never was that cold, awkward pause, so common with sullen spirits and barren brains. Lady Everingham thoroughly understood the art of conversation, which, indeed, consists of the exercise of two fine qualities. You must originate, and you must sympathize; you must possess at the same time the habit of communicating and the habit of listening. The union is rather rare, but irresistible.

Lady Everingham was not a celebrated beauty, but she was something infinitely more delightful—a captivating woman. There were combined in her, qualities not commonly met together, great vivacity of mind with great grace of manner. Her words sparkled and her movements charmed. There was, indeed, in all she said and did, that congruity that indicates a complete and harmonious organization. It was the same just proportion which characterised her form: a shape slight and undulating with grace; the most beautifully shaped ear; a small, soft hand; a foot that would have fitted the glass slipper; and which, by the bye, she lost no opportunity of displaying; and she was right, for it was a model.

Then there was music. Lady Theresa sung like a seraph: a rich voice, a grand style. And her sister could support her with grace and sweetness. And they did not sing too much. The Duke took up a review, and looked at Rigby's last slashing article. The country seemed ruined, but it appeared that the Whigs were still worse off than the Tories. The assassins had committed suicide. This poetical justice is pleasing. Lord Everingham lounging in an easy chair, perused with great satisfaction his Morning Chronicle, which contained a cutting reply to Mr. Rigby's article, not quite so "slashing" as the Right Honourable scribe's manifesto, but with some searching mockery, that became the subject and the subject-monger.

Mr. Lyle seated himself by the Duchess, and encouraged by her amenity, and speaking in whispers, became animated and agreeable, occasionally patting the lap-dog. Coningsby stood by the singers, or talked with them when the music had ceased; and Henry Sydney looked over a volume of Strutt's Sports and Pastimes, occasionally, without taking his eyes off the volume, calling the attention of his friends to his discoveries.

Mr. Lyle rose to depart, for he had some miles to return; he came forward with some hesitation, to hope that Coningsby would visit his bloodhounds, which Lord Henry had told him Coningsby

had expressed a wish to do. Lady Everingham remarked that she had not been at St. Geneviève since she was a girl, and it appeared Lady Theresa had never visited it. Lady Everingham proposed that they should all ride over on the morrow, and she appealed to her husband for his approbation, instantly given, for though she loved admiration, and he apparently was an iceberg, they were really devoted to each other. Then there was a consultation as to their arrangements. The Duchess would drive over in her pony chaise with Theresa. The Duke, as usual, had affairs that would occupy him. The rest were to ride. It was a happy suggestion, all anticipated pleasure ; and the evening terminated with the prospect of what Lady Everingham called an adventure.

The ladies themselves soon withdrew; the gentlemen lingered for awhile; the Duke took up his candle, and bid his guests good night; Lord Everingham drank a glass of Seltzer water, nodded, and vanished. Lord Henry and his friend sat up talking over the past. They were too young to call them old times; and yet what a life seemed to have elapsed since they had quitted Eton, dear old Eton! Their boyish feelings, and still latent boyish character, developed with their reminiscences.

"Do you remember Bucknall? Which Bucknall? The eldest: I saw him the other day at Nottingham; he is in the Rifles. Do you remember that day at Sirly Hall, that Paulet had that row with Dickinson? Did you like Dickinson? Hum! Paulet was a good fellow. I tell you who was a good fellow,—Paulet's little cousin. What! Augustus Le Grange? Oh! I liked Augustus Le Grange. I wonder where Buckhurst is? I had a letter from him the other day. He has gone with his uncle to Paris. We shall find him at Cambridge in October. I suppose you know Millbank has gone to Oriel. Has he, though! I wonder who will have our room at Cookesley's?—Cookesley was a good fellow! Oh, capital! How well he behaved when there was that row about our going out with the hounds! Do you remember Vere's face? It makes me laugh now when I think of it. I tell you who was a good fellow,—Kangaroo Gray; I liked him. I don't know any fellow who sang a better song!"

"By the bye," said Coningsby, "what sort of fellow is Eustace Lyle? I rather liked his look."

"Oh! I will tell you all about him," said Lord Henry. "He is a great ally of mine, and I think you will like him very much. It is a Roman Catholic family, about the oldest we have in the county, and the wealthiest. You see, Lyle's father was the most violent ultra Whig, and so were all Eustace's guardians; but the moment he came of age, he announced that he should not mix

himself up with either of the parties in the county, and that his tenantry might act exactly as they thought fit. My father thinks, of course, that Lyle is a Conservative, and that he only waits the occasion to come forward; but he is quite wrong. I know Lyle well, and he speaks to me without disguise. You see 'tis an old Cavalier family, and Lyle has all the opinions and feelings of his race. He will not ally himself with anti-monarchists, and democrats, and infidels, and sectarians; at the same time, why should he support a party who pretend to oppose these, but who never lose an opportunity of insulting his religion, and would deprive him, if possible, of the advantages of the very institutions which his family assisted in establishing?"

"Why, indeed? I am glad to have made his acquaintance," said Coningsby. "Is he clever?"

"I think so," said Lord Henry. "He is the most shy fellow, especially among women, that I ever knew, but he is very popular in the county. He does an amazing deal of good, and is one of the best riders we have. My father says, the very best; bold, but so very certain."

"He is older than we are?"

"My senior by a year: he is just of age."

"Oh, ah! twenty-one. A year younger than Gaston de Foix when he won Ravenna, and four years younger than John of Austria when he won Lepanto," observed Coningsby, musingly. "I vote we go to bed, old fellow!"

CHAPTER IV.

In a valley, not far from the margin of a beautiful river, raised on a lofty and artificial terrace at the base of a range of wooded heights, was a pile of modern building in the finest style of Christian architecture. It was of great extent and richly decorated. Built of a white and glittering stone, it sparkled with its pinnacles in the sunshine as it rose in strong relief against its verdant background. The winding valley, which was studded, but not too closely studded, with clumps of old trees, formed for a great extent on either side of the mansion a grassy demesne, which was called the Lower Park; but it was a region bearing the name of the Upper Park, that was the peculiar and most picturesque feature of this splendid residence. The wooded heights that formed the valley were not, as they appeared, a range of hills. Their crest was only the abrupt termination of a vast and enclosed table-land, abounding in all the qualities of the ancient chase: turf and trees, a wilderness of underwood, and a vast spread of gorse and fern.

The deer, that abounded, lived here in a world as savage as themselves: trooping down in the evening to the river. Some of them, indeed, were ever in sight of those who were in the valley, and you might often observe various groups clustered on the green heights above the mansion, the effect of which was most inspiriting and graceful. Sometimes in the twilight, a solitary form, magnified by the illusive hour, might be seen standing on the brink of the steep, large and black against the clear sky.

We have endeavoured slightly to sketch St. Geneviève as it appeared to our friends from Beaumanoir, winding into the valley the day after Mr. Lyle had dined with them. The valley opened for about half-a-mile opposite the mansion, which gave to the dwellers in it a view over an extensive and richly-cultivated country. It was through this district that the party from Beaumanoir had pursued their way. The first glance at the building, its striking situation, its beautiful form, its brilliant colour, its great extent, a gathering as it seemed of galleries, halls, and chapels, mullioned windows, portals of clustered columns, and groups of airy pinnacles and fretwork spires, called forth a general cry of wonder and of praise.

The ride from Beaumanoir had been delightful; the breath of summer in every breeze, the light of summer on every tree. The gay laugh of Lady Everingham rang frequently in the air; often were her sunny eyes directed to Coningsby, as she called his attention to some fair object or some pretty effect. She played the hostess of Nature, and introduced him to all the beauties.

Mr. Lyle had recognised them. He cantered forward with greetings on a fat little fawn-coloured pony, with a long white mane and white flowing tail, and the wickedest eye in the world. He rode by the side of the Duchess, and indicated their gently-descending route.

They arrived, and the peacocks, which were sunning themselves on the turrets, expanded their plumage to welcome them.

"I can remember the old house," said the Duchess, as she took Mr. Lyle's arm; "and I am happy to see the new one. The Duke had prepared me for much beauty, but the reality exceeds his report."

They entered by a short corridor into a large hall. They would have stopped to admire its rich roof, its gallery and screen; but their host suggested that they should refresh themselves after their ride, and they followed him through several apartments into a spacious chamber, its oaken panels covered with a series of most interesting pictures, representing the siege of St. Geneviève by the Parliament forces in 1643: the various assaults and sallies, and the final discomfiture of the rebels. In all these, figured a brave

and graceful Sir Eustace Lyle, in cuirass and buff jerkin, with gleaming sword and flowing plume. The sight of these pictures was ever a source of great excitement to Henry Sydney, who always lamented his ill-luck in not living in such days; nay, would insist that all others must equally deplore their evil destiny.

"See, Coningsby, this battery on the Upper Park," said Lord Henry. "This did the business: how it rakes up the valley; Sir Eustace works it himself. Mother, what a pity Beaumanoir was not besieged!"

"It may be," said Coningsby.

"I always fancy a siege must be so very interesting," said Lady Everingham. "It must be so exciting."

"I hope the next siege may be at Beaumanoir, instead of St. Geneviève," said Lyle, laughing; "as Henry Sydney has such a military predisposition. Duchess, you said the other day that you liked Malvoisie, and here is some."

"Now broach me a cask of Malvoisie,
Bring pasty from the doe;"

said the Duchess. "That has been my luncheon."

"A poetic repast," said Lady Theresa.

"Their breeds of sheep must have been very inferior in old days," said Lord Everingham, "as they made such a noise about their venison. For my part I consider it a thing as much gone by as tilts and tournaments."

"I am very sorry that they have gone by," said Lady Theresa.

"Everything has gone by that is beautiful," said Lord Henry.

"Life is much easier," said Lord Everingham.

"Life easy!" said Lord Henry. "Life appears to me to be a fierce struggle."

"Manners are easy," said Coningsby, "and life is hard."

"And I wish to see things exactly the reverse," said Lord Henry. "The means and modes of subsistence less difficult: the conduct of life more ceremonious."

"Civilization has no time for ceremony," said Lord Everingham.

"How very sententious you all are!" said his wife. "I want to see the hall and many other things." And they all rose.

There were indeed many other things to see: a long gallery, rich in ancestral portraits, specimens of art and costume from Holbein to Lawrence; courtiers of the Tudors, and cavaliers of the Stuarts, terminating in red-coated squires fresh from the field, and gentlemen buttoned up in black coats, and sitting in library chairs with their backs to a crimson curtain. Woman, however, is always charming; and the present generation may view their mothers painted by Lawrence, as if they were patronesses of Almacks'; or their grandmothers by Reynolds, as Robinettes caressing birds—

with as much delight as they gaze on the dewy-eyed matrons of Lely, and the proud bearing of the heroines of Vandyke. But what interested them more than the gallery, or the rich saloons, or even the baronial hall, was the chapel, in which art had exhausted all its invention, and wealth offered all its resources. The walls and vaulted roofs entirely painted in encaustic by the first artists of Germany, and representing the principal events of the second Testament, the splendour of the mosaic pavement, the richness of the painted windows, the sumptuousness of the altar, crowned by a masterpiece of Carlo Dolce and surrounded by a silver rail, the tone of rich and solemn light that pervaded all, and blended all the various sources of beauty into one absorbing and harmonious whole: all combined to produce an effect which stilled them into a silence that lasted for some minutes, until the ladies breathed their feelings in an almost inarticulate murmur of reverence and admiration; while a tear stole to the eye of the enthusiastic Henry Sydney.

Leaving the chapel, they sauntered through the gardens, until, arriving at their limit, they were met by the prettiest sight in the world; a group of little pony chairs, each drawn by a little fat fawn-coloured pony, like the one that Mr. Lyle had been riding. Lord Henry drove his mother; Lord Everingham, Lady Theresa; Lady Everingham was attended by Coningsby. Their host cantered by the Duchess's side, and along winding roads of very easy ascent, leading through the most beautiful woods, and offering the most charming landscapes, they reached in due time the Upper Park.

"One sees our host to very great advantage in his own house," said Lady Everingham. "He is scarcely the same person. I have not observed him once blush. He speaks and moves with ease. It is a pity that he is not more graceful. Above all things I like a graceful man."

"That chapel," said Coningsby, "was a fine thing."

"Very!" said Lady Everingham. "Did you observe the picture over the altar—the Virgin with blue eyes? I never observed blue eyes before in such a picture. What is your favourite colour for eyes?"

Coningsby felt embarrassed: he said something rather pointless about admiring everything that is beautiful.

"But every one has a favourite style; I want to know yours. Regular features—do you like regular features? Or is it expression that pleases you?"

"Expression; I think I like expression. Expression must be always delightful."

"Do you dance?"

"No; I am no great dancer. I fear I have very few accomplishments. I am very fond of fencing."

"I don't fence," said Lady Everingham, with a smile. "But I think you are right not to dance. It is not in your way. You are very ambitious, I believe?" she added.

"I was not aware of it; everybody is ambitious."

"You see I know something of your character. Henry has spoken of you to me a great deal; long before we met—met again, I should say, for we are very old friends, remember. Do you know your career very much interests me? I like ambitious men."

There is something very fascinating in the first idea that your career interests a charming woman. Coningsby felt that he was, perhaps driving a Madame de Longueville. A woman who likes ambitious men must be no ordinary character; clearly a sort of heroine. At this moment they reached the Upper Park, and the novel landscape changed the current of their remarks.

Far as the eye could reach there spread before them a savage sylvan scene. It wanted, perhaps, undulation of surface, but that deficiency was greatly compensated for by the multitude and prodigious size of the trees; they were the largest, indeed, that could well be met with in England; and there is no part of Europe where the timber is so huge. The broad interminable glades, the vast avenues, the quantity of deer browsing or bounding in all directions, the thickets of yellow gorse and green fern, and the breeze that even in the stillness of summer was ever playing over this table-land, all produced an animated and renovating scene. It was like suddenly visiting another country, living among other manners, and breathing another air. They stopped for a few minutes at a pavilion built for the purposes of the chase, and then returned, all gratified by this visit to what appeared to be the higher regions of the earth.

As they approached the brow of the hill that hung over St. Geneviève, they heard the great bell sound.

"What is that?" asked the Duchess.

"It is almsgiving day," replied Mr. Lyle, looking a little embarrassed, and for the first time blushing. "The people of the parishes with which I am connected come to St. Geneviève twice a-week at this hour."

"And what is your system?" inquired Lord Everingham, who had stopped, interested by the scene. "What check have you?"

"The rectors of the different parishes grant certificates to those who in their belief merit bounty according to the rules which I have established. These are again visited by my almoner, who countersigns the certificate, and then they present it at the postern-gate.

The certificate explains the nature of their necessities, and my steward acts on his discretion."

"Mamma, I see them!" exclaimed Lady Theresa.

"Perhaps your Grace may think that they might be relieved without all this ceremony," said Mr. Lyle, extremely confused. "But I agree with Henry and Mr. Coningsby, that Ceremony is not, as too commonly supposed, an idle form. I wish the people constantly and visibly to comprehend that Property is their protector and their friend."

"My reason is with you, Mr. Lyle," said the Duchess, "as well as my heart."

They came along the valley, a procession of Nature, whose groups an artist might have studied. The old man, who loved the pilgrimage too much to avail himself of the privilege of a substitute accorded to his grey hairs, came in person with his grandchild and his staff. There also came the widow with her child at the breast, and others clinging to her form; some sorrowful faces, and some pale; many a serious one, and now and then a frolic glance; many a dame in her red cloak, and many a maiden with her light basket; curly-headed urchins with demure looks, and sometimes a stalwart form baffled for a time of the labour which he desired. But not a heart there that did not bless the bell that sounded from the tower of St. Geneviève!

CHAPTER V.

"My fathers perilled their blood and fortunes for the cause of the Sovereignty, and Church of England," said Lyle to Coningsby, as they were lying stretched out on the sunny turf in the park of Beaumanoir, "and I inherit their passionate convictions. They were Catholics, as their descendant. No doubt they would have been glad to see their ancient faith predominant in their ancient land; but they bowed, as I bow, to an adverse and apparently irrevocable decree. But if we could not have the Church of our fathers, we honoured and respected the Church of their children. It was at least a Church; a "Catholic and Apostolic Church," as it daily declares itself. Besides, it was our friend. When we were persecuted by Puritanic Parliaments, it was the Sovereign and the Church of England that interposed, with the certainty of creating against themselves odium and mistrust, to shield us from the dark and relentless bigotry of Calvinism."

"I believe," said Coningsby, "that if Charles I. had hanged all the Catholic priests that Parliament petitioned him to execute, he would never have lost his crown."

"You were mentioning my father," continued Lyle. "He cer-

tainly was a Whig: Galled by political exclusion, he connected himself with that party in the State, which began to intimate emancipation. After all, they did not emancipate us. It was the fall of the Papacy in England that founded the Whig aristocracy; fact that must always lie at the bottom of their hearts, as, I assure you, it does of mine.

"I gathered at an early age," continued Lyle, "that I was expected to inherit my father's political connections with the family estates. Under ordinary circumstances this would probably have occurred. In times that did not force one to ponder, it is not likely I should have recoiled from uniting myself with a party formed of the best families in England, and ever famous for accomplished men and charming women. But I enter life in the midst of a convulsion in which the very principles of our political and social systems are called in question. I cannot unite myself with the party of destruction. It is an operative cause alien to my being. What, then, offers itself? The Duke talks to me of Conservative principles; but he does not inform me what they are. I observe indeed a party in the State whose rule it is to consent to no change, until it is clamorously called for, and then instantly to yield; but those are Concessionary, not Conservative principles. This party treats institutions as we do our pheasants, they preserve only to destroy them. But is there a statesman among these Conservatives who offers us a dogma for a guide, or defines any great political truth which we should aspire to establish? It seems to me a barren thing—this Conservatism—an unhappy cross-breed; the mule of politics that engenders nothing. What do you think of all this, Coningsby? I assure you I feel confused, perplexed, harassed. I know I have public duties to perform; I am, in fact, every day of my life solicited by all parties to throw the weight of my influence in one scale or another; but I am paralysed. I often wish I had no position in the country. The sense of its responsibility depresses me; makes me miserable. I speak to you without reserve; with a frankness which our short acquaintance scarcely authorises; but Henry Sydney has so often talked to me of you, and I have so long wished to know you, that I open my heart without restraint."

"My dear fellow," said Coningsby, "you have but described my feelings when you depictured your own. My mind on these subjects has long been a chaos. I float in a sea of troubles, and should long ago have been wrecked had I not been sustained by a profound, however vague, conviction, that there are still great truths, if we could but work them out; that Government, for instance, should be loved and not hated, and that Religion should be a faith and not a form."

The moral influence of residence furnishes some of the most interesting traits of our national manners. The presence of this power was very apparent throughout the district that surrounded Beaumanoir. The ladies of that house were deeply sensible of the responsibility of their position; thoroughly comprehending their duties, they fulfilled them without affectation, with earnestness, and with that effect which springs from a knowledge of the subject. The consequences were visible in the tone of the peasantry being superior to that which we too often witness. The ancient feudal feeling that lingers in these sequestered haunts, is an instrument which, when skilfully wielded, may be productive of vast social benefit. The Duke understood this well; and his family had imbibed all his views, and seconded them. Lady Everingham, once more in the scene of her past life, resumed the exercise of gentle offices, as if she had never ceased to be a daughter of the house, and as if another domain had not its claims upon her solicitude. Coningsby was often the companion of herself and her sister in their pilgrimages of charity and kindness. He admired the graceful energy, and thorough acquaintance with details, with which Lady Everingham superintended schools, organised societies of relief, and the discrimination which she brought to bear upon individual cases of suffering or misfortune. He was deeply interested as he watched the magic of her manner, as she melted the obdurate, inspired the slothful, consoled the afflicted, and animated with her smiles and ready phrase the energetic and the dutiful. Nor on these occasions was Lady Theresa seen under less favourable auspices. Without the vivacity of her sister, there was in her demeanour a sweet seriousness of purpose that was most winning; and sometimes a burst of energy, a trait of decision, which strikingly contrasted with the somewhat over-controlled character of her life in drawing-rooms.

In the society of these engaging companions, time for Coningsby glided away in a course which he sometimes wished nothing might disturb. Apart from them, he frequently felt himself pensive and vaguely disquieted. Even the society of Henry Sydney or Eustace Lyle, much as under ordinary circumstances they would have been adapted to his mood, did not compensate for the absence of that indefinite, that novel, that strange, yet sweet excitement, which he felt, he knew not exactly how or why, stealing over his senses. Sometimes the countenance of Theresa Sydney flitted over his musing vision; sometimes the merry voice of Lady Everingham haunted his ear. But to be their companion in ride or ramble; to avoid any arrangement which for many hours should

deprive him of their presence; was every day with Coningsby a principal object.

One day he had been out shooting rabbits with Lyle and Henry Sydney, and returned with them late to Beaumanoir to dinner. He had not enjoyed his sport, and he had not shot at all well. He had been dreamy, silent, had deeply felt the want of Lady Everingham's conversation, that was ever so poignant and so interestingly personal to himself; one of the secrets of her sway, though Coningsby was not then quite conscious of it. Talk to a man about himself, and he is generally captivated. That is the real way to win him. The only difference between men and women in this respect is, that most women are vain, and some men are not. There are some men who have no self-love; but if they have, female vanity is but a trifling and airy passion compared with the vast voracity of appetite which in the sterner sex can swallow anything, and always crave for more.

When Coningsby entered the drawing-room, there seemed a somewhat unusual bustle in the room, but as the twilight had descended, it was at first rather difficult to distinguish who was present. He soon perceived that there were strangers. A gentleman of pleasing appearance was near a sofa on which the Duchess and Lady Everingham were seated, and discoursing with some volubility. His phrases seemed to command attention; his audience had an animated glance, eyes sparkling with intelligence and interest; not a word was disregarded. Coningsby did not advance as was his custom; he had a sort of instinct, that the stranger was discoursing of matters of which he knew nothing. He turned to a table, he took up a book, which he began to read upside downwards. A hand was lightly placed on his shoulder. He looked round, it was another stranger; who said, however, in a tone of familiar friendliness,—

"How do you do, Coningsby?"

It was a young man about four-and-twenty years of age, very tall, very good-looking. Old recollections, his intimate greeting, a strong family likeness, helped Coningsby to conjecture correctly who was the person who addressed him. It was, indeed, the eldest son of the Duke, the Marquis of Beaumanoir, who had arrived at his father's unexpectedly with his friend, Mr. Melton, on their way to the north.

Mr. Melton was a gentleman of the highest fashion, and a very great favourite in society. He was about thirty, good-looking, with an air that commanded attention, and manners, though facile, sufficiently finished. He was very communicative, though calm, and without being witty, had at his service a turn of phrase, ac-

quired by practice and success, which was, or which always seemed to be, poignant. The ladies seemed especially to be delighted at his arrival. He knew everything of everybody they cared about; and Coningsby listened in silence to names which for the first time reached his ears, but which seemed to excite great interest. Mr. Melton frequently addressed his most lively observations and his most sparkling anecdotes to Lady Everingham, who evidently relished all that he said, and returned him in kind.

Throughout the dinner Lady Everingham and Mr. Melton maintained what appeared a most entertaining conversation, principally about things and persons which did not in any way interest our hero; who, however, had the satisfaction of hearing Lady Everingham, in the drawing-room, say in a careless tone to the Duchess,—

"I am so glad, mamma, that Mr. Melton has come; we wanted some amusement."

What a confession! What a revelation to Coningsby of his infinite insignificance! Coningsby entertained a great aversion for Mr. Melton, but felt his spirit unequal to the social contest. The genius of the untutored inexperienced youth quailed before that of the long-practised, skilful man of the world. What was the magic of this man? What was the secret of this ease, that nothing could disturb, and yet was not deficient in deference and good taste? And then his dress, it seemed fashioned by some unearthly artist; yet it was impossible to detect the unobtrusive causes of the general effect that was irresistible. Coningsby's coat was made by Stultz; almost every fellow in the sixth form had his coats made by Stultz; yet Coningsby fancied that his own garment looked as if it had been furnished by some rustic slop-seller. He began to wonder where Mr. Melton got his boots from, and glanced at his own, which, though made in St. James's Street, seemed to him to have a cloddish air.

Lady Everingham was determined that Mr. Melton should see Beaumanoir to the greatest advantage. Mr. Melton had never been there before, except at Christmas, with the house full of visitors and factitious gaiety. Now he was to see the country. Accordingly, there were long rides every day, which Lady Everingham called expeditions, and which generally produced some slight incident which she styled an adventure. She was very kind to Coningsby, but had no time to indulge in the lengthened conversations which he had previously found so magical. Mr. Melton was always on the scene, the monopolising hero, it would seem, of every thought, and phrase, and plan. Coningsby began to think that Beaumanoir was not so delightful a place as he had imagined. He

began to think that he had stayed there perhaps too long. He had received a letter from Mr. Rigby, to inform him that he was expected at Coningsby Castle at the beginning of September, to meet Lord Monmouth, who had returned to England, and for grave and special reasons was about to reside at his chief seat, which he had not visited for many years. Coningsby had intended to have remained at Beaumanoir until that time; but suddenly it occurred to him, that the Age of Ruins was past, and that he ought to seize the opportunity of visiting Manchester, which was in the same county as the Castle of his grandfather. So difficult is it to speculate upon events! Muse as we may, we are the creatures of circumstances; and the unexpected arrival of a London dandy at the country seat of an English nobleman sent this representative of the New Generation fresh from Eton, nursed in prejudices, yet with a mind predisposed to inquiry and prone to meditation, to a scene apt to stimulate both intellectual processes; which demanded investigation and induced thought—the great METROPOLIS of LABOUR.

END OF BOOK III.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

A GREAT city, whose image dwells in the memory of man, is the type of some great idea. Rome represents conquest; Faith hovers over the towers of Jerusalem; and Athens embodies the pre-eminent quality of the antique world—Art.

In modern ages, Commerce has created London; while Manners, in the most comprehensive sense of the word, have long found a supreme capital in the airy and bright-minded city of the Seine.

What Art was to the ancient world, Science is to the modern: the distinctive faculty. In the minds of men the useful has succeeded to the beautiful. Instead of the city of the Violet Crown, a Lancashire village has expanded into a mighty region of factories and warehouses. Yet rightly understood, Manchester is as great a human exploit as Athens.

The inhabitants, indeed, are not so impressed with their idiosyncrasy as the countrymen of Pericles and Phidias. They do not fully comprehend the position which they occupy. It is the philosopher alone who can conceive the grandeur of Manchester, and the immensity of its future. There are yet great truths to tell, if we had either the courage to announce or the temper to receive them.

CHAPTER II.

A FEELING of melancholy, even of uneasiness, attends our first entrance into a great town, especially at night. Is it that the sense of all this vast existence with which we have no connection, where we are utterly unknown, oppresses us with our insignificance? Is it that it is terrible to feel friendless where all have friends?

Yet reverse the picture. Behold a community where you are unknown, but where you will be known, perhaps honoured. A place where you have no friends, but where, also, you have no enemies A spot that has hitherto been a blank in your thoughts, as you have been a cipher in its sensations, and yet a spot, perhaps, pregnant with your destiny!

There is, perhaps, no act of memory so profoundly interesting

as to recall the careless mood and moment in which we have entered a town, a house, a chamber, on the eve of an acquaintance or an event, that have given a colour and an impulse to our future life.

What is this Fatality that men worship? Is it a Goddess?

Unquestionably it is a power that acts mainly by female agents. Women are the Priestesses of Predestination.

Man conceives Fortune, but Woman conducts it.

It is the Spirit of Man that says, "I will be great;" but it is the Sympathy of Woman that usually makes him so.

It was not the comely and courteous hostess of the Adelphi Hotel, Manchester, that gave occasion to these remarks, though she may deserve them, and though she was most kind to our Coningsby as he came in late at night very tired, and not in very good humour.

He had travelled the whole day through the great district of labour, his mind excited by strange sights, and at length wearied by their multiplication. He had passed over the plains where iron and coal supersede turf and corn, dingy as the entrance of Hades, and flaming with furnaces; and now he was among illumined factories, with more windows than Italian palaces, and smoking chimneys taller than Egyptian obelisks. Alone in the great metropolis of machinery itself, *sitting* down in a solitary coffee-room glaring with gas, with no appetite, a whirling head, and not a plan or purpose for the morrow, why was he there? Because a being, whose name even was unknown to him, had met him in a hedge ale-house during a thunder-storm, and told him that the Age of Ruins was past.

Remarkable instance of the influence of an individual; some evidence of the extreme susceptibility of our hero.

Even his bedroom was lit by gas. Wonderful city! That, however, could be got rid of. He opened the window. The summer air was sweet, even in this land of smoke and toil. He feels a sensation such as in Lisbon or Lima precedes an earthquake. The house appears to quiver. It is a sympathetic affection occasioned by a steam-engine in a neighbouring factory

Notwithstanding, however, all these novel incidents, Coningsby slept the deep sleep of youth and health, of a brain which, however occasionally perplexed by thought, had never been harassed by anxiety. He rose early, freshened, and in fine spirits. And by the time the deviled chicken and the buttered toast (that mysterious and incomparable luxury, which can only be obtained at an inn) had disappeared, he felt all the delightful excitement of travel.

And now for action! Not a letter had Coningsby; not an indi-

vidual in that vast city was known to him. He went to consult his kind hostess, who smiled confidence. He was to mention her name at one place, his own at another. All would be right; she seemed to have reliance in the destiny of such a nice young man.

He saw all; they were kind and hospitable to the young stranger, whose thought, and earnestness, and gentle manners, attracted them. One recommended him to another; all tried to aid and assist him. He entered chambers vaster than are told of in Arabian fable, and peopled with habitants more wondrous than Afrite or Peri. For there he beheld, in long-continued ranks, those mysterious forms full of existence without life, that perform with facility, and in an instant, what man can fulfil only with difficulty and in days. A machine is a slave that neither brings nor bears degradation: it is a being endowed with the greatest degree of energy, and acting under the greatest degree of excitement, yet free at the same time from all passion and emotion. It is, therefore, not only a slave, but a supernatural slave. And why should one say that the machine does not live? It breathes, for its breath forms the atmosphere of some towns. It moves with more regularity than man. And has it not a voice? Does not the spindle sing like a merry girl at her work, and the steam-engine roar in jolly chorus, like a strong artisan handling his lusty tools, and gaining a fair day's wages for a fair day's toil?

Nor should the weaving-room be forgotten, where a thousand or fifteen hundred girls may be observed in their coral necklaces, working like Penelope in the day-time; some pretty, some pert, some graceful and jocund, some absorbed in their occupation; a little serious some, few sad. And the cotton you have observed in its rude state, that you have seen the silent spinner change into thread, and the bustling weaver convert into cloth, you may now watch as in a moment it is tinted with beautiful colours, or printed with fanciful patterns. And yet the mystery of mysteries is to view machines making machines; a spectacle that fills the mind with curious, and even awful, speculation.

From early morn to the late twilight, our Coningsby for several days devoted himself to the comprehension of Manchester. It was to him a new world, pregnant with new ideas, and suggestive of new trains of thought and feeling. In this unprecedented partnership between capital and science, working on a spot which Nature had indicated as the fitting theatre of their exploits, he beheld a great source of the wealth of nations which had been reserved for these times, and he perceived that this wealth was rapidly developing classes whose power was very imperfectly recognised in the constitutional scheme, and whose duties in the social system seemed altogether omitted. Young as he was, the bent of

his mind, and the inquisitive spirit of the times, had sufficiently prepared him, not indeed to grapple with these questions, but to be sensible of their existence, and to ponder.

One evening, in the coffee-room of the hotel, having just finished his well-earned dinner, and relaxing his mind for the moment in a fresh research into the Manchester Guide, an individual, who had also been dining in the same apartment, rose from his table, and, after lolling over the empty fire-place, reading the framed announcements, looking at the directions of several letters waiting there for their owners, picking his teeth, turned round to Coningsby, and, with an air of uneasy familiarity, said,—

"First visit to Manchester, sir?"

"My first."

"Gentleman traveller, I presume?"

"I am a traveller," said Coningsby.

"Hem!—From south?"

"From the south."

"And pray, sir, how did you find business as you came along? Brisk, I dare say. And yet there is a something, a sort of a something; didn't it strike you, sir, there was a something? A deal of queer paper about, sir!"

"I fear you are speaking on a subject of which I know nothing," said Coningsby, smiling; "I do not understand business at all; though I am not surprised that, being at Manchester, you should suppose so."

"Ah! not in business. Hem! Professional?"

"No," said Coningsby, "I am nothing."

"Ah! an independent gent; hem! and a very pleasant thing, too. Pleased with Manchester, I dare say?" continued the stranger.

"And astonished," said Coningsby; "I think, in the whole course of my life, I never saw so much to admire."

"Seen all the lions, have no doubt?"

"I think I have seen everything," said Coningsby, rather eager and with some pride.

"Very well, very well," exclaimed the stranger, in a patronising tone. "Seen Mr. Burley's weaving-room, I dare say?"

"Oh! isn't it wonderful?" said Coningsby.

"A great many people," said the stranger, with a rather supercilious smile.

"But after all," said Coningsby, with animation, "it is the machinery without any interposition of manual power that overwhelms me. It haunts me in my dreams," continued Coningsby; "I see cities peopled with machines. Certainly Manchester is the most wonderful city of modern times!"

The stranger stared a little at the enthusiasm of his companion and then picked his teeth.

"Of all the remarkable things here," said Coningsby, "what on the whole, sir, do you look upon as the most so?"

"In the way of machinery?" asked the stranger.

"In the way of machinery."

"Why, in the way of machinery, you know," said the stranger, very quietly, "Manchester is a dead letter."

"A dead letter!" said Coningsby.

"Dead and buried," said the stranger, accompanying his words with that peculiar application of his thumb to his nose, that signifies so eloquently that all is up.

"You astonish me!" said Coningsby.

"It's a booked place though," said the stranger, "and no mistake. We have all of us a very great respect for Manchester, in course; look upon her as a sort of mother, and all that sort of thing. But she is behind the times, sir, and that won't do in this age. The long and short of it is, Manchester is gone by."

"I thought her only fault might be she was too much in advance of the rest of the country," said Coningsby, very innocently.

"If you want to see life," said the stranger, "go to Staley-bridge or Bolton. There's high pressure."

"But the population of Manchester is increasing," said Coningsby.

"Why, yes; not a doubt. You see we have all of us a great respect for the town. It is a sort of metropolis of this district, and there is a good deal of capital in the place. And it has some first-rate Institutions. There's the Manchester Bank. That's a noble institution, full of commercial enterprise; understands the age, sir; high-pressure to the back-bone. I came up to town to see the manager to-day. I am building a new mill now myself at Staley-bridge, and mean to open it by January, and when I do, I'll give you leave to pay another visit to Mr. Burley's weaving-room, with my compliments."

"I am very sorry," said Coningsby, "that I have only another day left; but pray tell me, what would you recommend me most to see within a reasonable distance of Manchester?"

"My mill is not finished," said the stranger, musingly, "and though there is still a great deal worth seeing at Staley-bridge, still you had better wait to see my new mill. And Bolton, let me see; Bolton—there is nothing at Bolton that can hold up its head for a moment against my new mill; but then it is not finished. Well, well, let us see. What a pity this is not the 1st of January, and then my new mill would be at work! I should like to see Mr. Burley's face, or even Mr. Ashworth's, that day. And the Oxford Road Works, where they are always making a little change, bit

by bit reform, eh! not a very particular fine appetite, I suspect, for dinner, at the Oxford Road Works, the day they hear of my new mill being at work. But you want to see something tip-top. Well, there's Millbank; that's regular slap-up—quite a sight, regular lion; if I were you I would see Millbank."

"Millbank!" said Coningsby; "what Millbank?"

"Millbank of Millbank, made the place—made it himself. About three miles from Bolton;—train to-morrow morning at 7-25,—get a fly at the station,—and you will be at Millbank by 8-40."

"Unfortunately I am engaged to-morrow morning," said Coningsby, "and yet I am most anxious,—particularly anxious, to see Millbank."

"Well, there's a late train," said the stranger, "3-15; you will be there by 4-30."

"I think I could manage that," said Coningsby.

"Do," said the stranger; "and if you ever find yourself at Staley-bridge, I shall be very happy to be of service. I must be off now. My train goes at 9-15." And he presented Coningsby with his card as he wished him good night.

MR. G. O. A. HEAD,
STALEY-BRIDGE.

CHAPTER III.

In a green valley of Lancaster, contiguous to that district of factories on which we have already touched, a clear and powerful stream flows through a broad meadow land. Upon its margin, adorned, rather than shadowed, by some very old elm-trees, for they are too distant to serve except for ornament, rises a vast deep red brick pile, which though formal and monotonous in its general character, is not without a certain beauty of proportion and an artist-like finish in its occasional masonry. The front, which is of great extent, and covered with many tiers of small windows, is flanked by two projecting wings in the same style, which form a large court, completed by a dwarf wall crowned with a light and rather elegant railing; in the centre, the principal entrance, a lofty portal of bold and beautiful design, surmounted by a statue of Commerce.

This building, not without a degree of dignity, is what is technically, and not very felicitously, called a mill; always translated by the French in their accounts of our manufacturing riots, "moulin;" and which really was the principal factory of Oswald

Millbank, the father of that youth, whom, we trust, our readers have not quite forgotten.

At some little distance, and rather withdrawn from the principal stream, were two other smaller structures of the same style. About a quarter of a mile further on, appeared a village of not inconsiderable size, and remarkable from the neatness and even picturesque character of its architecture, and the gay gardens that surrounded it. On a sunny knoll in the background rose a church, in the best style of Christian architecture, and near it was a clerical residence and a school-house of similar design. The village, too, could boast of another public building; an Institute, where there were a library and a lecture-room; and a reading-hall, which any one might frequent at certain hours, and under reasonable regulations.

On the other side of the principal factory, but more remote, about half-a-mile up the valley, surrounded by beautiful meadows, and built on an agreeable and well-wooded elevation, was the mansion of the mill-owner; apparently a commodious and not inconsiderable dwelling-house, built in what is called a villa style, with a variety of gardens and conservatories. The atmosphere of this somewhat striking settlement was not disturbed and polluted by the dark vapour, which, to the shame of Manchester, still infests that great town, for Mr. Millbank, who liked nothing so much as an invention, unless it were an experiment, took care to consume his own smoke.

The sun was declining when Mr. Coningsby arrived at Millbank, and the gratification which he experienced on first beholding it, was not a little diminished, when, on inquiring at the village, he was informed that the hour was past for seeing the works. Determined not to relinquish his purpose without a struggle, he repaired to the principal mill, and entered the counting-house, which was situated in one of the wings of the building.

"Your pleasure, sir?" said one of three individuals sitting on high stools behind a high desk.

"I wish, if possible, to see the works."

"Quite impossible, sir," and the clerk, withdrawing his glance, continued his writing. "No admission without an order, and no admission with an order after two o'clock."

"I am very unfortunate," said Coningsby.

"Sorry for it, sir. Give me ledger K. X., will you, Mr. Benson?"

"I think, Mr. Millbank would grant me permission," said Coningsby.

"Very likely, sir; to-morrow. Mr. Millbank is there, sir, but very much engaged." He pointed to an inner counting-house,

and the glass doors permitted Coningsby to observe several individuals in close converse.

"Perhaps his son, Mr. Oswald Millbank, is here?" inquired Coningsby.

"Mr. Oswald is in Belgium," said the clerk.

"Would you give a message to Mr. Millbank, and say a friend of his son's at Eton is here, and here only for a day, and wishes very much to see his works?"

"Can't possibly disturb Mr. Millbank now, sir; but, if you like to sit down, you can wait and see him yourself"

Coningsby was content to sit down, though he grew very impatient at the end of a quarter of an hour. The ticking of the clock, the scratching of the pens of the three silent clerks, irritated him. At length, voices were heard, doors opened, and the clerk said, "Mr. Millbank is coming, sir," but nobody came; voices became hushed, doors were shut; again nothing was heard, save the ticking of the clock and scratching of pen.

At length, there was a general stir, and they all did come forth, Mr. Millbank among them, a well-proportioned, comely man, with a fair face inclining to ruddiness, a quick, glancing, hazel eye, the whitest teeth, and short, curly, chestnut hair, here and there slightly tinged with grey. It was a visage of energy and decision.

He was about to pass through the counting-house with his companions, with whom his affairs were not concluded, when he observed Coningsby, who had risen.

"This gentleman wishes to see me?" he inquired of his clerk, who bowed assent.

"I shall be at your service, sir, the moment I have finished with these gentlemen."

"The gentleman wishes to see the works, sir," said the clerk.

"He can see the works at proper times," said Mr. Millbank, somewhat pettishly; "tell him the regulations;" and he was about to go.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Coningsby, coming forward, and with an air of earnestness and grace that arrested the step of the manufacturer. "I am aware of the regulations, but would beg to be permitted to infringe them."

"It cannot be, sir," said Mr. Millbank, moving.

"I thought, sir, being here only for a day, and as a friend of your son ——"

Mr. Millbank stopped and said,—

"Oh! a friend of Oswald's, eh? What, at Eton?"

"Yes, sir, at Eton; and I had hoped perhaps to have found him here."

"I am very much engaged, sir, at this moment," said Mr. Mill-

bank; "I am sorry I cannot pay you any personal attention, but my clerk will show you everything. Mr. Benson, let this gentleman see everything;" and he withdrew.

"Be pleased to write your name here, sir," said Mr. Benson, opening a book, and our friend wrote his name and the date of his visit to Millbank:—

"HARRY CONINGSBY, SEPT. 2, 1836."

Coningsby beheld in this great factory the last and the most refined inventions of mechanical genius. The building had been fitted up by a capitalist as anxious to raise a monument of the skill and power of his order, as to obtain a return for the great investment.

"It is the glory of Lancashire!" exclaimed the enthusiastic Mr. Benson.

The clerk spoke freely of his master, whom he evidently idolised, and of his great achievements, and Coningsby encouraged him. He detailed to Coningsby the plans which Mr. Millbank had pursued, both for the moral and physical well-being of his people; how he had built churches, and schools, and institutes; houses and cottages on a new system of ventilation; how he had allotted gardens; established singing classes.

"Here is Mr. Millbank," continued the clerk, as he and Coningsby, quitting the factory, re-entered the court.

Mr. Millbank was approaching the factory, and the moment that he observed them, he quickened his pace.

"Mr. Coningsby?" he said when he reached them. His countenance was rather disturbed, and his voice a little trembled, and he looked on our friend with a glance scrutinising and serious. Coningsby bowed.

"I am sorry that you should have been received at this place with so little ceremony, sir," said Mr. Millbank; "but had your name been mentioned, you would have found it cherished here." He nodded to the clerk, who disappeared.

Coningsby began to talk about the wonders of the factory, but Mr. Millbank recurred to other thoughts that were passing in his mind. He spoke of his son: he expressed a kind reproach that Coningsby should have thought of visiting this part of the world without giving them some notice of his intention, that he might have been their guest, that Oswald might have been there to receive him, that they might have made arrangements that he should see everything, and in the best manner; in short, that they might all have shown, however slightly, the deep sense of their obligations to him.

"My visit to Manchester, which led to this, was quite acci-

dental," said Coningsby. "I am bound for the other division of the county, to pay a visit to my grandfather, Lord Monmouth, but an irresistible desire came over me during my journey to view this famous district of industry. It is some days since I ought to have found myself at Coningsby, and this is the reason why I am so pressed."

A cloud passed over the countenance of Millbank as the name of Lord Monmouth was mentioned, but he said nothing. Turning towards Coningsby, with an air of kindness:

"At least," said he, "let not Oswald hear that you did not taste our salt. Pray dine with me to-day; there is yet an hour to dinner; and as you have seen the factory, suppose we stroll together through the village."

CHAPTER IV.

The village clock struck five as Mr. Millbank and his guest entered the gardens of his mansion. Coningsby lingered a moment to admire the beauty and gay profusion of the flowers.

"Your situation," said Coningsby, looking up the green and silent valley, "is absolutely poetic."

"I try sometimes to fancy," said Mr. Millbank, with a rather fierce smile, "that I am in the New World."

They entered the house; a capacious and classic hall, at the end a staircase in the Italian fashion. As they approached it, the sweetest and the clearest voice exclaimed from above, "Papa! papa!" and instantly a young girl came bounding down the stairs, but suddenly seeing a stranger with her father she stopped upon the landing-place, and was evidently on the point of as rapidly retreating as she had advanced, when Mr. Millbank waved his hand to her and begged her to descend. She came down slowly; as she approached them her father said, "A friend you have often heard of, Edith: this is Mr. Coningsby."

She started; blushed very much; and then, with a trembling and uncertain gait, advanced, put forth her hand with a wild unstudied grace, and said in a tone of sensibility, "How often have we all wished to see and to thank you!"

This daughter of his host was of tender years; apparently she could scarcely have counted sixteen summers. She was delicate and fragile, but as she raised her still blushing visage to her father's guest, Coningsby felt that he had never beheld a countenance of such striking and such peculiar beauty.

"My only daughter, Mr. Coningsby, Edith; a Saxon name, for she is the daughter of a Saxon."

But the beauty of the countenance was not the beauty of the Saxons. It was a radiant face, one of those that seem to have been touched in their cradle by a sunbeam, and to have retained all their brilliancy and suffused and mantling lustre. One marks sometimes such faces, diaphanous with delicate splendour, in the southern regions of France. Her eye, too, was the rare eye of Aquitaine; soft and long, with lashes drooping over the cheek, dark as her clustering ringlets.

They entered the drawing-room.

"Mr. Coningsby," said Millbank to his daughter, "is in this part of the world only for a few hours, or I am sure he would become our guest. He has, however, promised to stay with us now and dine."

"If Miss Millbank will pardon this dress," said Coningsby, bowing an apology for his inevitable frock and boots; the maiden raised her eyes and bent her head.

The hour of dinner was at hand. Millbank offered to show Coningsby to his dressing-room. He was absent but a few minutes. When he returned he found Miss Millbank alone. He came somewhat suddenly into the room. She was playing with her dog, but ceased the moment she observed Coningsby.

Coningsby, who since his practice with Lady Everingham, flattered himself that he had advanced in small talk, and was not sorry that he had now an opportunity of proving his prowess, made some lively observations about pets and the breeds of lap-dogs, but he was not fortunate in extracting a response or exciting a repartee. He began then on the beauty of Millbank, which he would on no account have avoided seeing, and inquired when she had last heard of her brother. The young lady, apparently much distressed, was murmuring something about Antwerp, when the entrance of her father relieved her from her embarrassment.

Dinner being announced, Coningsby offered his arm to his fair companion, who took it with her eyes fixed on the ground.

"You are very fond, I see, of flowers," said Coningsby, as they moved along; and the young lady said "Yes."

The dinner was plain, but perfect of its kind. The young hostess seemed to perform her office with a certain degree of desperate determination. She looked at a chicken and then at Coningsby, and murmured something which he understood. Sometimes she informed herself of his tastes or necessities in more detail, by the medium of her father, whom she treated as a sort of dragoman; in this way: "Would not Mr. Coningsby, papa, take this or that, or do so and so?" Coningsby was always careful to reply in a direct manner, without the agency of the interpreter; but he did not advance. Even a petition for the

great honour of taking a glass of sherry with her only induced the beautiful face to bow. And yet when she had first seen him, she had addressed him even with emotion. What could it be? He felt less confidence in his increased power of conversation. Why Theresa Sydney was scarcely a year older than Miss Millbank, and though she did not certainly originate like Lady Everingham, he got on with her perfectly well.

Mr. Millbank did not seem to be conscious of his daughter's silence: at any rate, he attempted to compensate for it. He talked fluently and well; on all subjects his opinions seemed to be decided, and his language was precise. He was really interested in what Coningsby had seen, and what he had felt; and this sympathy divested his manner of the disagreeable effect that accompanies a tone inclined to be dictatorial. More than once Coningsby observed the silent daughter listening with extreme attention to the conversation of himself and her father.

The dessert was remarkable. Millbank was very proud of his fruit. A bland expression of self-complacency spread over his features as he surveyed his grapes, his peaches, his figs.

"These grapes have gained a medal," he told Coningsby. "Those too are prize peaches. I have not yet been so successful with my figs. These however promise, and perhaps this year I may be more fortunate."

"What would your brother and myself have given for such a dessert at Eton!" said Coningsby to Miss Millbank, wishing to say something, and something too that might interest her.

She seemed infinitely distressed, and yet this time would speak,—

"Let me give you some." He caught by chance her glance immediately withdrawn; yet it was a glance not only of beauty, but of feeling and thought. She added, in a hushed and hurried tone, dividing very nervously some grapes, "I hardly know whether Oswald will be most pleased or grieved when he hears that you have been here."

"And why grieved?" said Coningsby.

"That he should not have been here to welcome you, and that your stay is for so brief a time. It seems so strange that after having talked of you for years, we should see you only for hours."

"I hope I may return," said Coningsby, "and that Millbank may be here to welcome me; but I hope I may be permitted to return even if he be not."

But there was no reply; and soon after, Mr. Millbank talking of the American market, and Coningsby helping himself to a glass of claret, the daughter of the Saxon, looking at her father, rose and left the room, so suddenly and so quickly that Coningsby could scarcely gain the door.

"Yes," said Millbank, filling his glass, and pursuing some previous observations, "all that we want in this country is to be masters of our own industry; but Saxon industry and Norman manners never will agree; and some day, Mr. Coningsby, you will find that out."

"But what do you mean by Norman manners?" inquired Coningsby.

"Did you ever hear of the Forest of Rossendale?" said Millbank. "If you were staying here, you should visit the district. It is an area of twenty-four square miles. It was disforested in the early part of the sixteenth century, possessing at that time eighty inhabitants. Its rental in James the First's time was 120*l*. When the woollen manufacture was introduced into the north, the shuttle competed with the plough in Rossendale, and about forty years ago we sent them the Jenny. The eighty souls are now increased to upwards of eighty thousand, and the rental of the forest, by the last county assessment, amounts to more than 50,000*l*.—41,000 per cent. on the value in the reign of James I. Now I call that an instance of Saxon industry competing successfully with Norman manners."

"Exactly," said Coningsby, "but those manners are gone."

"From Rossendale," said Millbank, with a grim smile; "but not from England."

"Where do you meet them?"

"Meet them! In every place, at every hour; and feel them, too, in every transaction of life."

"I know, sir, from your son," said Coningsby, inquiringly, "that you are opposed to an aristocracy."

"No, I am not. I am for an aristocracy; but a real one, a natural one."

"But, sir, is not the aristocracy of England," said Coningsby, "a real one? You do not confound our peerage, for example, with the degraded patricians of the Continent."

"Hum!" said Millbank. "I do not understand how an aristocracy can exist, unless it be distinguished by some quality which no other class of the community possesses. Distinction is the basis of aristocracy. If you permit only one class of the population, for example, to bear arms, they are an aristocracy; not one much to my taste; but still a great fact. That, however, is not the characteristic of the English peerage. I have yet to learn they are richer than we are, better informed, wiser, or more distinguished for public or private virtue. Is it not monstrous, then, that a small number of men, several of whom take the titles of Duke and Earl from towns in this very neighbourhood, towns

which they never saw, which never heard of them, which they did not form, or build, or establish,—I say, is it not monstrous, that individuals so circumstanced should be invested with the highest of conceivable privileges—the privilege of making laws? Dukes and Earls indeed! I say there is nothing in a masquerade more ridiculous."

"But do you not argue from an exception, sir?" said Coningsby. "The question is, whether a preponderance of the aristocratic principle in a political constitution be, as I believe, conducive to the stability and permanent power of a State, and whether the peerage, as established in England, generally tends to that end. We must not forget in such an estimate the influence which, in this country, is exercised over opinion by ancient lineage."

"Ancient lineage!" said Mr. Millbank; "I never heard of a peer with an ancient lineage. The real old families of this country are to be found among the peasantry; the gentry, too, may lay some claim to old blood. I can point you out Saxon families in this county who can trace their pedigrees beyond the Conquest; I know of some Norman gentlemen whose fathers undoubtedly came over with the Conqueror. But a peer with an ancient lineage is to me quite a novelty. No, no; the thirty years of the wars of the Roses freed us from those gentlemen. I take it, after the battle of Tewkesbury, a Norman baron was almost as rare a being in England as a wolf is now."

"I have always understood," said Coningsby, "that our peerage was the finest in Europe."

"From themselves," said Millbank, "and the heralds they pay to paint their carriages. But I go to facts. When Henry VII. called his first Parliament, there were only twenty-nine temporal peers to be found, and even some of them took their seats illegally, for they had been attainted. Of those twenty-nine not five remain, and they, as the Howards for instance, are not Norman nobility. We owe the English peerage to three sources: the spoliation of the Church; the open and flagrant sale of its honours by the elder Stuarts; and the boroughmongering of our own times. Those are the three main sources of the existing peerage of England, and in my opinion disgraceful ones. But I must apologise for my frankness in thus speaking to an aristocrat."

"Oh, by no means, sir, I like discussion. Your son and myself at Eton have had some encounters of this kind before. But if your view of the case be correct," added Coningsby, smiling, "you cannot at any rate accuse our present peers of Norman manners."

"Yes, I do: they adopted Norman manners while they usurped

Norman titles. They have neither the right of the Normans, nor do they fulfil the duty of the Normans: they did not conquer the land, and they do not defend it."

"And where will you find your natural aristocracy?" asked Coningsby.

"Among those men whom a nation recognises as the most eminent for virtue, talents, and property, and, if you please, birth and standing in the land. They guide opinion; and, therefore, they govern. I am no leveller; I look upon an artificial equality as equally pernicious with a factitious aristocracy; both depressing the energies, and checking the enterprise of a nation. I like man to be free—really free: free in his industry as well as his body. What is the use of Habeas Corpus, if a man may not use his hands when he is out of prison?"

"But it appears to me you have, in a great measure, this natural aristocracy in England."

"Ah, to be sure! If we had not, where should we be? It is the counteracting power that saves us—the disturbing cause in the calculations of short-sighted selfishness. I say it now, and I have said it a hundred times, the House of Commons is a more aristocratic body than the House of Lords. The fact is, a great peer would be a greater man now in the House of Commons than in the House of Lords. Nobody wants a second chamber, except a few disreputable individuals. It is a valuable institution for any member of it who has no distinction—neither character, talents, nor estate. But a peer who possesses all or any of these great qualifications, would find himself an immeasurably more important personage in what, by way of jest, they call the Lower House."

"Is not the revising wisdom of a senate a salutary check on the precipitation of a popular assembly?"

"Why should a popular assembly, elected by the flower of a nation, be precipitate? If precipitate, what senate could stay an assembly so chosen? No, no, no! the thing has been tried over and over again; the idea of restraining the powerful by the weak is an absurdity—the question is settled. If we wanted a fresh illustration, we need only look to the present state of our own House of Lords. It originates nothing; it has, in fact, announced itself as a mere Court of Registration of the decrees of your House of Commons; and if by any chance it ventures to alter some miserable detail in a clause of a bill that excites public interest, what a clatter through the country, at Conservative banquets got up by the rural attorneys, about the power, authority, and independence of the House of Lords; nine times nine, and one cheer more! No, sir, you may make aristocracies by laws;

you can only maintain them by manners. The manners of England preserve it from its laws. And they have substituted for our formal aristocracy an essential aristocracy; the government of those who are distinguished by their fellow-citizens"

"But then it would appear," said Coningsby, "that the remedial action of our manners has removed all the political and social evils of which you complain?"

"They have created a power that may remove them; a power that has the capacity to remove them. But in a very great measure they still exist, and must exist yet, I fear, for a very long time. The growth of our civilisation has ever been as slow as our oaks; but this tardy development is preferable to the temporary expansion of the gourd."

"The future seems to me sometimes a dark cloud."

"Not to me," said Mr. Millbank. "I am sanguine—I am the Disciple of Progress. But I have cause for my faith. I have witnessed advance. My father has often told me that in his early days the displeasure of a peer of England was like a sentence of death to a man. Why, it was esteemed a great concession to public opinion, so late as the reign of George II., that Lord Ferrars should be executed for murder. The king of a new dynasty, who wished to be popular with the people, insisted on it, and even then he was hanged with a silken cord. At any rate we may defend ourselves now," continued Mr. Millbank, "and, perhaps, do something more. I defy any peer to crush me, though there is one who would be very glad to do it. No more of that; I am very happy to see you at Millbank—very happy to make your acquaintance," he continued, with some emotion, "and not merely because you are my son's friend and more than friend."

The walls of the dining-room were covered with pictures of great merit, all of the modern English school. Mr. Millbank understood no other, he was wont to say; and he found that many of his friends who did, bought a great many pleasing pictures that were copies, and many originals that were very displeasing. He loved a fine free landscape by Lee, that gave him the broad plains, the green lanes, and running streams of his own land; a group of animals by Landseer, as full of speech and sentiment as if they were designed by Æsop; above all, he delighted in the household humour and homely pathos of Wilkie. And if a higher tone of imagination pleased him, he could gratify it without difficulty among his favourite masters. He possessed some specimens of Etty worthy of Venice when it was alive; he could muse amid the twilight ruins of ancient cities raised by the magic pencil of Danby, or accompany a group of fair Neapolitans to a festival by the genial aid of Uwins.

Opposite Coningsby was a portrait, which had greatly attracted his attention during the whole dinner. It represented a woman extremely young and of a rare beauty. The costume was of that classical character prevalent in this country before the general peace; a blue ribbon bound together as a fillet her clustering chestnut curls. The face was looking out of the canvass, and Coningsby never raised his eyes without catching its glance of blended vivacity and tenderness.

There are moments when our sensibility is affected by circumstances of a very trivial character. It seems a fantastic emotion, but the gaze of this picture disturbed the serenity of Coningsby. He endeavoured sometimes to avoid looking at it, but it irresistibly attracted him. More than once during dinner he longed to inquire whom it represented; but it is a delicate subject to ask questions about portraits, and he refrained. Still, when he was rising to leave the room the impulse was irresistible. He said to Mr. Millbank, "By whom is that portrait, sir?"

The countenance of Millbank became disturbed; it was not an expression of tender reminiscence that fell upon his features. On the contrary, the expression was agitated, almost angry.

"Oh! that is by a country artist," he said, "of whom you never heard," and moved away.

They found Miss Millbank in the drawing-room; she was sitting at a round table covered with working materials, apparently dressing a doll.

"Nay," thought Coningsby, "she must be too old for that."

He addressed her, and seated himself by her side. There were several dolls on the table, but he discovered, on examination, that they were pincushions; and elicited, with some difficulty, that they were making for a fancy fair about to be held in aid of that excellent institution, the Manchester Athenæum. Then the father came up and said,—

"My child, let us have some tea;" and she rose and seated herself at the tea-table. Coningsby also quitted his seat, and surveyed the apartment.

There were several musical instruments; among others he observed a guitar, not such an instrument as one buys in a music-shop, but such an one as tinkles at Seville—a genuine Spanish guitar. Coningsby repaired to the tea-table.

"I am glad that you are fond of music, Miss Millbank."

A blush and a bow.

"I hope after tea you will be so kind as to touch the guitar."

Signals of great distress.

"Were you ever at Birmingham?"

"Yes;" a sigh.

"What a splendid music-hall! They should build one at Manchester."

"They ought," in a whisper.

The tea-tray was removed; Coningsby was conversing with Mr. Millbank, who was asking him questions about his son; what he thought of Oxford; what he thought of Oriel; should himself have preferred Cambridge; but had consulted a friend, an Oriel man, who had a great opinion of Oriel; and Oswald's name had been entered some years back. He rather regretted it now; but the thing was done. Coningsby, remembering the promise of the guitar, turned round to claim its fulfilment, but the singer had made her escape. Time elapsed, and no Miss Millbank re-appeared. Coningsby looked at his watch; he had to go three miles to the train, which started, as his friend of the previous night would phrase it, at 9-45.

"I should be happy if you remained with us," said Mr. Millbank; "but as you say it is out of your power, in this age of punctual travelling a host is bound to speed the parting guest. The carriage is ready for you."

"Farewell, then, sir. You must make my adieux to Miss Millbank, and accept my thanks for your great kindness."

"Farewell, Mr. Coningsby," said his host, taking his hand, which he retained for a moment, as if he would say more. Then leaving it, he repeated with a somewhat wandering air, and in a voice of emotion, "Farewell—farewell, Mr. Coningsby."

CHAPTER V.

Towards the end of the session of 1836, the hopes of the Conservative party were again in the ascendant. The Tadpoles and the Tapers had infused such enthusiasm into all the country attorneys, who, in their turn, had so bedevilled the registration, that it was whispered in the utmost confidence, but as a flagrant truth, that Reaction was at length "a great fact." All that was required was the opportunity; but as the existing parliament was not two years old, and the government had an excellent working majority, it seemed that the occasion could scarcely be furnished. Under these circumstances, the back-stairs politicians, not content with having by their premature movements already seriously damaged the career of their leader, to whom in public they pretended to be devoted, began weaving again their old intrigues about the court, and not without effect.

It was said that the royal ear lent itself with no marked repugnance to suggestions which might rid the sovereign of ministers,

who, after all, were the ministers not of his choice, but of his necessity. But William IV., after two failures in a similar attempt, after his respective embarrassing interviews with Lord Grey and Lord Melbourne, on their return to office in 1832 and 1835, was resolved never to make another move unless it were a checkmate. The King, therefore, listened and smiled, and loved to talk to his favourites of his private feelings and secret hopes; the first outraged, the second cherished; and a little of these revelations of royalty was distilled to great personages, who in their turn spoke hypothetically to their hangers-on of royal dispositions, and possible contingencies, while the hangers-on and go-betweens, in their turn, looked more than they expressed; took county members by the button into a corner, and advised, as friends, the representatives of boroughs to look sharply after the next registration.

Lord Monmouth, who was never greater than in adversity, and whose favourite excitement was to aim at the impossible, had never been more resolved on a Dukedom than when the Reform Act deprived him of the twelve votes which he had accumulated to attain that object. While all his companions in discomfiture were bewailing their irretrievable overthrow, Lord Monmouth became almost a convert to the measure, which had furnished his devising and daring mind, palled with prosperity, and satiated with a life of success, with an object, and the stimulating enjoyment of a difficulty.

He had early resolved to appropriate to himself a division of the county in which his chief seat was situate; but what most interested him, because it was most difficult, was the acquisition of one of the new boroughs that was in his vicinity, and in which he possessed considerable property. The borough, however, was a manufacturing town, and returning only one member; it had hitherto sent up to Westminster a radical shopkeeper, one Mr. Jawster Sharp, who had taken what is called "a leading part" in the town on every "crisis" that had occurred since 1830; one of those zealous patriots who had got up penny subscriptions for gold cups to Lord Grey; cries for the bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill; and public dinners where the victual was devoured before grace was said; a worthy who makes speeches, passes resolutions, votes addresses, goes up with deputations, has at all times the necessary quantity of confidence in the necessary individual; confidence in Lord Grey; confidence in Lord Durham; confidence in Melbourne: and can also, if necessary, give three cheers for the King, or three groans for the Queen.

But the days of the genus Jawster Sharp were over in this borough as well as in many others. He had contrived in his lustre of agitation to feather his nest pretty successfully; by which he

had lost public confidence and gained his private end. Three hungry Jawster Sharps, his hopeful sons, had all become commissioners of one thing or another; temporary appointments with interminable duties; a low-church son-in-law found himself comfortably seated in a chancellor's living; and several cousins and nephews were busy in the Excise. But Jawster Sharp himself was as pure as Cato. He had always said he would never touch the public money, and he had kept his word. It was an understood thing that Jawster Sharp was never to show his face again on the hustings of Darlford; the Liberal party was determined to be represented in future by a man of station, substance, character; a true Reformer, but one who wanted nothing for himself, and, therefore might, if needful, get something for them. They were looking out for such a man, but were in no hurry. The seat was looked upon as a good thing; a contest certainly, every place is contested now, but as certainly a large majority. Notwithstanding all this confidence, however, Reaction or Registration, or some other mystification, had produced effects even in this creature of the Reform Bill, the good Borough of Darlford. The borough that out of gratitude to Lord Grey returned a jobbing shopkeeper twice to Parliament as its representative without a contest, had now a Conservative Association, with a banker for its chairman, and a brewer for its vice-president, and four sharp lawyers nibbing their pens, noting their memorandum-books, and assuring their neighbours, with a consoling and complacent air, that "Property must tell in the long run." Whispers also were about, that when the proper time arrived, a Conservative candidate would certainly have the honour of addressing the electors. No name mentioned, but it was not concealed that he was to be of no ordinary calibre; a tried man, a distinguished individual, who had already fought the battle of the constitution, and served his country in eminent posts; honoured by the nation, favoured by his sovereign. These important and encouraging intimations were ably diffused in the columns of the Conservative journal, and in a style which, from its high tone, evidently indicated no ordinary source and no common pen. Indeed, there appeared occasionally in this paper, articles written with such unusual vigour, that the proprietors of the Liberal journal almost felt the necessity of getting some eminent hand down from town to compete with them. It was impossible that they could emanate from the rival Editor. They knew well the length of their brother's tether. Had they been more versant in the periodical literature of the day, they might in this "slashing" style have caught perhaps a glimpse of the future candidate for their borough, the Right Honourable Nicholas Rigby.

Lord Monmouth, though he had been absent from England

since 1832, had obtained from his vigilant correspondent a current knowledge of all that had occurred in the interval. All the hopes, fears, plans, prospects, manœuvres, and machinations; their rise and fall; how some had bloomed, others were blighted; not a shade of reaction that was not represented to him; not the possibility of an adhesion that was not duly reported; he could calculate at Naples at any time, within ten, the result of a dissolution. The season of the year had prevented him crossing the Alps in 1834, and after the general election he was too shrewd a practiser in the political world to be deceived as to the ultimate result. Lord Eskdale, in whose judgment he had more confidence than in that of any individual, had told him from the first that the pear was not ripe; Rigby, who always hedged against his interest by the fulfilment of his prophecy of irremediable discomfiture, was never very sanguine. Indeed, the whole affair was always considered premature by the good judges; and a long time elapsed before Tadpole and Taper recovered their secret influence, or resumed their ostentatious loquacity or their silent insolence.

The pear, however, was now ripe. Even Lord Eskdale wrote that after the forthcoming registration a bet was safe, and Lord Monmouth had the satisfaction of drawing the Whig Minister at Naples into a cool thousand on the event. Soon after this he returned to England, and determined to pay a visit to Coningsby Castle, feast the county, patronise the borough, diffuse that confidence in the party which his presence never failed to do; so great and so just was the reliance in his unerring powers of calculation and his intrepid pluck. Notwithstanding Schedule A, the prestige of his power had not sensibly diminished, for his essential resources were vast, and his intellect always made the most of his influence.

True, however, to his organisation, Lord Monmouth, even to save his party and gain his dukedom, must not be bored. He, therefore, filled his castle with the most agreeable people from London, and even secured for their diversion a little troop of French comedians. Thus supported, he received his neighbours with all the splendour befitting his immense wealth and great position, and with one charm which even immense wealth and great position cannot command, the most perfect manner in the world. Indeed, Lord Monmouth was one of the most finished gentlemen that ever lived; and as he was extremely good-natured, and for a selfish man even good-humoured, there was rarely a cloud of caprice or ill-temper to prevent his fine manners having their fair play. The country neighbours were all fascinated; they were received with so much dignity and dismissed with so much grace. Nobody would believe a word of the stories against him. Had he lived all his life at Coningsby, fulfilled every duty of a great Eng-

lish nobleman, benefited the county, loaded the inhabitants with favours, he would not have been half so popular as he found himself within a fortnight of his arrival with the worst county reputation conceivable, and every little squire vowing that he would not even leave his name at the Castle to show his respect.

Lord Monmouth, whose contempt for mankind was absolute; not a fluctuating sentiment, not a mournful conviction, ebbing and flowing with circumstances, but a fixed, profound, unalterable instinct; who never loved any one, and never hated any one except his own children; was diverted by his popularity, but he was also gratified by it. At this moment it was a great element of power; he was proud that, with a vicious character, after having treated these people with unprecedented neglect and contumely, he should have won back their golden opinions in a moment by the magic of manner and the splendour of wealth. His experience proved the soundness of his philosophy.

Lord Monmouth worshipped gold, though, if necessary, he could squander it like a caliph. He had even a respect for very rich men; it was his only weakness, the only exception to his general scorn for his species. Wit, power, particular friendships, general popularity, public opinion, beauty, genius, virtue, all these are to be purchased; but it does not follow that you can buy a rich man: you may not be able or willing to spare enough. A person or a thing that you perhaps could not buy, became invested, in the eyes of Lord Monmouth, with a kind of halo amounting almost to sanctity.

As the prey rose to the bait, Lord Monmouth resolved they should be gorged. His banquets were doubled; a ball was announced; a public day fixed; not only the county, but the principal inhabitants of the neighbouring borough, were encouraged to attend; Lord Monmouth wished it, if possible, to be without distinction of party. He had come to reside among his old friends, to live and die where he was born. The Chairman of the Conservative Association and the Vice-President exchanged glances, which would have become Tadpole and Taper; the four attorneys nibbed their pens with increased energy, and vowed that nothing could withstand the influence of the aristocracy "in the long run." All went and dined at the Castle; all returned home overpowered by the condescension of the host, the beauty of the ladies, several real Princesses, the splendour of his liveries, the variety of his viands, and the flavour of his wines. It was agreed that at future meetings of the Conservative Association, they should always give "Lord Monmouth and the House of Lords!"—superseding the Duke of Wellington, who was to figure in an after-toast with the Battle of Waterloo.

It was not without emotion that Coningsby beheld for the first time the castle that bore his name. It was visible for several miles before he even entered the park, so proud and prominent was its position, on the richly-wooded steep of a considerable eminence. It was a castellated building, immense and magnificent, in a very faulty and incongruous style of architecture, indeed, but compensating in some degree for these deficiencies of external taste and beauty by the splendour and accommodation of its interior, and which a Gothic castle, raised according to the strict rules of art, could scarcely have afforded. The declining sun threw over the pile a rich colour as Coningsby approached it, and lit up with fleeting and fanciful tints the delicate foliage of the rare shrubs and tall thin trees that clothed the acclivity on which it stood. Our young friend felt a little embarrassed when, without a servant and in a hack chaise, he drew up to the grand portal, and a crowd of retainers came forth to receive him. A superior servant inquired his name with a stately composure, that disdained to be supercilious. It was not without some degree of pride and satisfaction that the guest replied, "Mr. Coningsby." The instantaneous effect was magical. It seemed to Coningsby that he was borne on the shoulders of the people to his apartment; each tried to carry some part of his luggage; and he only hoped his welcome from their superiors might be as hearty.

CHAPTER VI.

It appeared to Coningsby in his way to his room, that the Castle was in a state of great excitement; everywhere bustle, preparation, moving to and fro, ascending and descending of stairs, servants in every corner; orders boundlessly given, rapidly obeyed; many desires, equal gratification. All this made him rather nervous. It was quite unlike Beaumanoir. That also was a palace, but it was a home. This, though it should be one to him, seemed to have nothing of that character. Of all mysteries the social mysteries are the most appalling. Going to an assembly for the first time is more alarming than the first battle. Coningsby had never before been in a great house full of company. It seemed an overwhelming affair. The sight of the servants bewildered him; how then was he to encounter their masters?

That, however, he must do in a moment. A groom of the chambers indicates the way to him, as he proceeds with a hesitating yet hurried step through several ante-chambers and drawing-rooms; then doors are suddenly thrown open, and he is ushered into the largest and most sumptuous saloon that he had ever entered. It

was full of ladies and gentlemen. Coningsby for the first time in his life was at a great party. His immediate emotion was to sink into the earth; but perceiving that no one even noticed him, and that not an eye had been attracted to his entrance, he regained his breath and in some degree his composure, and standing aside, endeavoured to make himself as well as he could master of the land.

Not a human being that he had ever seen before! The circumstance of not being noticed, which a few minutes since he had felt as a relief, became now a cause of annoyance. It seemed that he was the only person standing alone whom no one was addressing. He felt renewed and aggravated embarrassment, and fancied, perhaps was conscious, that he was blushing. At length his ear caught the voice of Mr. Rigby. The speaker was not visible; he was at a distance surrounded by a wondering group, whom he was severally and collectively contradicting, but Coningsby could not mistake those harsh, arrogant tones. He was not sorry indeed that Mr. Rigby did not observe him. Coningsby never loved him particularly, which was rather ungrateful, for he was a person who had been kind, and, on the whole, serviceable to him; but Coningsby writhed, especially as he grew older, under Mr. Rigby's patronising air and paternal tone. Even in old days, though attentive, Coningsby had never found him affectionate. Mr. Rigby would tell him what to do and see, but never asked him what he wished to do and see. It seemed to Coningsby that it was always contrived that he should appear the *protégé* or poor relation of a dependent of his family. These feelings, which the thought of Mr. Rigby had revived, caused our young friend, by an inevitable association of ideas, to remember that, unknown and unnoticed as he might be, he was the only Coningsby in that proud Castle, except the Lord of the Castle himself; and he began to be rather ashamed of permitting a sense of his inexperience in the mere forms and fashions of society so to oppress him, and deprive him, as it were, of the spirit and carriage which became alike his character and his position. Emboldened and greatly restored to himself, Coningsby advanced into the body of the saloon.

On his legs, wearing his blue ribbon and bending his head frequently to a lady who was seated on a sofa, and continually addressed him, Coningsby recognised his grandfather. Lord Monmouth was somewhat balder than four years ago, when he had come down to Montem, and a little more portly perhaps; but otherwise unchanged. Lord Monmouth never condescended to the artifices of the toilet, and, indeed, notwithstanding his life of excess, had little need of them. Nature had done much for him

and the slow progress of decay was carried off by his consummate bearing. He looked, indeed, the chieftain of a house of whom a cadet might be proud.

For Coningsby, not only the chief of his house, but his host too. In either capacity he ought to address Lord Monmouth. To sit down to dinner without having previously paid his respects to his grandfather, to whom he was so much indebted, and whom he had not seen for so many years, struck him not only as uncourtly, but as unkind and ungrateful, and, indeed, in the highest degree absurd. But how was he to do it? Lord Monmouth seemed very deeply engaged, and apparently with some very great lady. And if Coningsby advanced and bowed, in all probability he would only get a bow in return. He remembered the bow of his first interview. It had made a lasting impression on his mind. For it was more than likely Lord Monmouth would not recognise him. Four years had not very sensibly altered Lord Monmouth, but four years had changed Harry Coningsby from a schoolboy into a man. Then how was he to make himself known to his grandfather? To announce himself as Coningsby, as his Lordship's grandson, seemed somewhat ridiculous. To address his grandfather as Lord Monmouth would serve no purpose: to style Lord Monmouth "grandfather," would make every one laugh, and seemed stiff and unnatural. What was he to do? To fall into an attitude, and exclaim, "Behold your grandchild!" or "Have you forgot your Harry?"

Even to catch Lord Monmouth's glance was not a very easy affair; he was much occupied on one side by the great lady, on the other were several gentlemen who occasionally joined in the conversation. But something must be done.

There ran through Coningsby's character, as we have before mentioned, a vein of simplicity, which was not its least charm. It resulted, no doubt, in a great degree from the earnestness of his nature. There never was a boy so totally devoid of affectation, which was remarkable, for he had a brilliant imagination, a quality that, from its fantasies, and the vague and indefinite desires it engenders, generally makes those whose characters are not formed, very affected. The Duchess, who was a fine judge of character, and who greatly regarded Coningsby, often mentioned this trait as one which, combined with his great abilities and acquirements so unusual at his age, rendered him very interesting. In the present instance it happened that, while Coningsby was watching his grandfather, he observed a gentleman advance, make his bow, say and receive a few words, and retire. This little incident, however, made a momentary diversion in the immediate circle of Lord Monmouth, and before they could all resume their

former talk and fall into their previous positions, an impulse sent forth Coningsby, who walked up to Lord Monmouth, and standing before him, said,—

"How do you do, grandpapa?"

Lord Monmouth beheld his grandson. His comprehensive and penetrating glance took in every point with a flash. There stood before him one of the handsomest youths he had ever seen, with a mien as graceful as his countenance was captivating; and his whole air breathing that freshness and ingenuousness which none so much appreciates as the used man of the world. And this was his child; the only one of his blood to whom he had been kind. It would be exaggeration to say that Lord Monmouth's heart was touched; but his good-nature effervesced, and his fine taste was deeply gratified. He perceived in an instant such a relation might be a valuable adherent; an irresistible candidate for future elections: a brilliant tool to work out the Dukedom. All these impressions and ideas, and many more, passed through the quick brain of Lord Monmouth ere the sound of Coningsby's words had seemed to cease, and long before the surrounding guests had recovered from the surprise which they had occasioned them, and which did not diminish, when Lord Monmouth, advancing, placed his arms round Coningsby with a dignity of affection that would have become Louis XIV., and then in the high manner of the old Court, kissed him on each cheek.

"Welcome to your home," said Lord Monmouth. "You have grown a great deal."

Then Lord Monmouth led the agitated Coningsby to the great lady, who was a Princess and an Ambassadress, and then, placing his arm gracefully in that of his grandson, he led him across the room, and presented him in due form to some royal blood that was his guest, in the shape of a Russian Grand-duke. His Imperial Highness received our hero as graciously as the grandson of Lord Monmouth might expect; but no greeting can be imagined warmer than the one he received from the lady with whom the Grand-duke was conversing. She was a dame whose beauty was mature, but still radiant. Her figure was superb; her dark hair crowned with a tiara of curious workmanship. Her rounded arm was covered with costly bracelets, but not a jewel on her finely-formed bust, and the least possible rouge on her still oval cheek. Madame Colonna retained her charms.

The party, though so considerable, principally consisted of the guests at the Castle. The suite of the Grand-duke included several Counts and Generals; then there were the Russian Ambassador and his lady; and a Russian Prince and Princess, their relations.

The Prince and Princess Colonna and the Princess Lucretia were also paying a visit to the Marquess; and the frequency of these visits made some strait-laced magnificoes mysteriously declare it was impossible to go to Coningsby; but as they were not asked it did not much signify. The Marquess knew a great many very agreeable people of the highest *ton*, who took a more liberal view of human conduct, and always made it a rule to presume the best motives instead of imputing the worst. There was Lady St. Julians, for example, whose position was of the highest; no one more sought; she made it a rule to go everywhere and visit everybody, provided they had power, wealth, and fashion. She knew no crime except a woman not living with her husband; that was past pardon. As long as his presence sanctioned her conduct, however shameless, it did not signify; but if the husband were a brute, neglected his wife first, and then deserted her; then, if a breath but sullies her name she must be crushed; unless, indeed, her own family were very powerful, which makes a difference, and sometimes softens immorality into indiscretion.

Lord and Lady Gaverstock were also there, who never said an unkind thing of anybody; her ladyship was pure as snow; but her mother having been divorced, she ever fancied she was paying a kind of homage to her parent, by visiting those who might some day be in the same predicament. There were other lords and ladies of high degree; and some who, though neither lords nor ladies, were charming people, which Lord Monmouth chiefly cared about; troops of fine gentlemen who came and went; and some who were neither fine nor gentlemen, but who were very amusing or very obliging, as circumstances required, and made life easy and pleasant to others and themselves.

A new scene this for Coningsby, who watched with interest all that passed before him. The dinner was announced as served; an affectionate arm guides him at a moment of some perplexity.

"When did you arrive, Harry? We shall sit together. How is the Duchess?" inquired Mr. Rigby, who spoke as if he had seen Coningsby for the first time; but who indeed had, with that eye which nothing could escape, observed his reception by his grandfather, marked it well, and inwardly digested it.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE was to be a first appearance on the stage of Lord Monmouth's theatre to-night, the expectation of which created considerable interest in the party, and was one of the principal subjects of conversation at dinner. Villebecque, the manager of the

troop, had married the actress Stella, once celebrated for her genius and her beauty; a woman who had none of the vices of her craft, for, though she was a fallen angel, there were what her countrymen style extenuating circumstances in her declension. With the whole world at her feet, she had remained unsullied. Wealth and its enjoyments could not tempt her, although she was unable to refuse her heart to one whom she deemed worthy of possessing it. She found her fate in an Englishman, who was the father of her only child, a daughter. She thought she had met in him a hero, a demi-god, a being of deep passion and original and creative mind; but he was only a voluptuary, full of violence instead of feeling, and eccentric, because he had great means with which he could gratify extravagant whims. Stella found she had made the great and irretrievable mistake. She had exchanged devotion for a passionate and evanescent fancy, prompted at first by vanity, and daily dissipating under the influence of custom and new objects. Though not stainless in conduct, Stella was pure in spirit. She required that devotion which she had yielded; and she separated herself from the being to whom she had made the most precious sacrifice. He offered her the consoling compensation of a settlement, which she refused; and she returned with a broken spirit to that profession of which she was still the ornament and the pride.

The animating principle of her career was her daughter, whom she educated with a solicitude which the most virtuous mother could not surpass. To preserve her from the stage, and to secure for her an independence, were the objects of her mother's life; but nature whispered to her, that the days of that life were already numbered. The exertions of her profession had alarmingly developed an inherent tendency to pulmonary disease. Anxious that her child should not be left without some protector, Stella yielded to the repeated solicitations of one who from the first had been her silent admirer, and she married Villebecque, a clever actor, and an enterprising man who meant to be something more. Their union was not of long duration, though it was happy on the side of Villebecque, and serene on that of his wife. Stella was recalled from this world, where she had known much triumph and more suffering; and where she had exercised many virtues, which elsewhere, though not here, may perhaps be accepted as some palliation of one great error.

Villebecque acted becomingly to the young charge which Stella had bequeathed to him. He was himself, as we have intimated, a man of enterprise, a restless spirit, not content to move for ever in the sphere in which he was born. Vicissitudes are the lot of such aspirants. Villebecque became manager of a small

theatre, and made money. If Villebecque, without a "sou," had been a schemer, Villebecque with a small capital was the very Chevalier Law of theatrical managers. He took a larger theatre, and even that succeeded. Soon he was recognised as the lessee of more than one, and still he prospered. Villebecque began to dabble in Opera-houses. He enthroned himself at Paris; his envoys were heard of at Milan and Naples, at Berlin and St. Petersburg. His controversies with the "Conservatoire" at Paris ranked among state papers. Villebecque rolled in chariots and drove cabs; Villebecque gave refined suppers to great nobles, who were honoured by the invitation; Villebecque wore a red ribbon in the button-hole of his frock, and more than one cross in his gala dress.

All this time the daughter of Stella increased in years and stature, and we must add in goodness: a mild, soft-hearted girl, as yet with no decided character, but one who loved calmness and seemed little fitted for the circle in which she found herself. In that circle, however, she ever experienced kindness and consideration. No enterprise however hazardous, no management however complicated, no schemes however vast, ever for a moment induced Villebecque to forget "La Petite." If only for one breathless instant, hardly a day elapsed but he saw her; she was his companion in all his rapid movements, and he studied every comfort and convenience that could relieve her delicate frame in some degree from the inconvenience and exhaustion of travel. He was proud to surround her with luxury and refinement; to supply her with the most celebrated masters; to gratify every wish that she could express.

But all this time Villebecque was dancing on a volcano. The catastrophe which inevitably occurs in the career of all great speculators, and especially theatrical ones, arrived to him. Flushed with his prosperity, and confident in his constant success, nothing would satisfy him but universal empire. He had established his despotism at Paris, his dynasties at Naples and at Milan; but the North was not to him, and he was determined to appropriate it. Berlin fell before a successful campaign, though a costly one; but St. Petersburg and London still remained. Resolute and reckless, nothing deterred Villebecque. One season all the Opera-houses in Europe obeyed his nod, and at the end of it he was ruined. The crash was utter, universal, overwhelming; and under ordinary circumstances a French bed and a brasier of charcoal alone remained for Villebecque, who was equal to the occasion. But the thought of "La Petite" and the remembrance of his promise to Stella deterred him from the deed. He reviewed his position in a spirit becoming a practical philosopher. Was he worse off

than before he commenced his career? Yes, because he was older;—though to be sure he had his compensating reminiscences. But was he too old to do anything? At forty-five the game was not altogether up; and in a large theatre, not too much lighted, and with the artifices of a dramatic toilet, he might still be able successfully to re-assume those characters of coxcombs and "muscadins," in which he was once so celebrated. Luxury had perhaps a little too much enlarged his waist, but diet and rehearsals would set all right.

Villebecque in their adversity broke to "La Petite," that the time had unfortunately arrived when it would be wise for her to consider the most effectual means for turning her talents and accomplishments to account. He himself suggested the stage, to which otherwise there were doubtless objections, because her occupation in any other pursuit would necessarily separate them; but he impartially placed before her the relative advantages and disadvantages of every course which seemed to lie open to them, and left the preferable one to her own decision. "La Petite," who had wept very much over Villebecque's misfortunes, and often assured him that she cared for them only for his sake, decided for the stage, solely because it would secure their not being parted; and yet, as she often assured him, she feared she had no predisposition for the career.

Villebecque had now not only to fill his own parts at the theatre at which he had obtained an engagement, but he had also to be the instructor of his ward. It was a life of toil; an addition of labour and effort that need scarcely have been made to the exciting exertion of performance, and the dull exercise of rehearsal; but he bore it all without a murmur; with a self-command and a gentle perseverance which the finest temper in the world could hardly account for; certainly not when we remember that its possessor, who had to make all these exertions and endure all this wearisome toil, had just experienced the most shattering vicissitudes of fortune, and been hurled from the possession of absolute power and illimitable self-gratification.

Lord Eskdale, who was always doing kind things to actors and actresses, had a great regard for Villebecque, with whom he had often supped. He had often been kind, too, to "La Petite." Lord Eskdale had a plan for putting Villebecque, as he termed it, "on his legs again." It was to establish him with a French company in London at some pretty theatre; Lord Eskdale to take a private box and to make all his friends do the same. Villebecque, who was as sanguine as he was good-tempered, was ravished by this friendly scheme. He immediately believed that he should recover his great fortunes as rapidly as he had lost them. He

foresaw in "La Petite" a genius as distinguished as that of her mother, although as yet not developed, and he was boundless in his expressions of gratitude to his patron. And indeed of all friends, a friend in need is the most delightful. Lord Eskdale had the talent of being a friend in need. Perhaps it was because he knew so many worthless persons. But it often happens that worthless persons are merely people who are worth nothing.

Lord Monmouth having written to Mr. Rigby of his intention to reside for some months at Coningsby, and having mentioned that he wished a troop of French comedians to be engaged for the summer, Mr. Rigby had immediately consulted Lord Eskdale on the subject, as the best current authority. Thinking this a good opportunity of giving a turn to poor Villebecque, and that it might serve as a capital introduction to their scheme of the London company, Lord Eskdale obtained for him the engagement.

Villebecque and his little troop had now been a month at Coningsby, and had hitherto performed three times a-week. Lord Monmouth was content; his guests much gratified; the company, on the whole, much approved of. It was, indeed, considering its limited numbers, a capital company. There was a young lady who played the old woman's parts—nothing could be more garrulous and venerable; and a lady of maturer years who performed the heroines—gay and graceful as May. Villebecque himself was a celebrity in characters of airy insolence and careless frolic. Their old man, indeed, was rather hard, but handy; could take anything either in the high serious, or the low droll. Their sentimental lover was rather too much bewigged, and spoke too much to the audience—a fault rare with the French; but this hero had a vague idea that he was ultimately destined to run off with a princess.

In this wise, affairs had gone on for a month; very well, but not too well. The enterprising genius of Villebecque, once more a manager, prompted him to action. He felt an itching desire to announce a novelty. He fancied Lord Monmouth had yawned once or twice when the heroine came on. Villebecque wanted to make a *coup*. It was clear that "La Petite" must sooner or later begin. Could she find a more favourable audience, or a more fitting occasion, than were now offered? True it was, she had a great repugnance to come out; but it certainly seemed more to her advantage that she should make her first appearance at a private theatre than at a public one; supported by all the encouraging patronage of Coningsby Castle, than subjected to all the cynical criticism of the stalls of St. James'.

These views and various considerations were urged and represented by Villebecque to "La Petite," with all the practised

powers of plausibility of which so much experience as a manager had made him master. "La Petite" looked infinitely distressed, but yielded, as she ever did. And the night of Coningsby's arrival at the Castle was to witness in its private theatre the first appearance of MADEMOISELLE FLORA.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE guests re-assembled in the great saloon before they repaired to the theatre. A lady on the arm of the Russian Prince bestowed on Coningsby a haughty, but not ungracious, bow; which he returned, unconscious of the person to whom he bent. She was, however, a very striking person—not beautiful; her face, indeed, at the first glance was almost repulsive, yet it ever attracted a second gaze. A remarkable pallor distinguished her; her features had neither regularity nor expression; neither were her eyes fine; but her brow impressed you with an idea of power of no ordinary character or capacity. Her figure was as fine and commanding as her face was void of charm. Juno, in the full bloom of her immortality, could have presented nothing more majestic. Coningsby watched her as she swept along like a resistless Fate.

Servants now went round and presented to each of the guests a billet of the performance. It announced in striking characters the *début* of Mademoiselle Flora. A principal servant, bearing branch lights, came forward and bowed to the Marquess. Lord Monmouth went immediately to the Grand-duke, and notified to His Imperial Highness that the comedy was ready. The Grand-duke offered his arm to the Ambassadress; the rest were following; Coningsby was called; Madame Colonna wished him to be her beau.

It was a very pretty theatre; had been rapidly rubbed up and renovated here and there; the painting just touched; a little gilding on a cornice. There were no boxes, but the ground-floor, which gradually ascended, was carpeted and covered with arm-chairs, and the back of the theatre with a new and rich curtain of green velvet.

They are all seated; a great artist performs on the violin, accompanied by another great artist on the piano. The lights rise; somebody evidently crosses the stage behind the curtain. They are disposing the scene. In a moment the curtain will rise also.

"Have you seen Lucretia?" said the Princess to Coningsby. "She is so anxious to resume her acquaintance with you."

But before he could answer, the bell rang, and the curtain rose. The old man, who had a droll part to-night, came forward and maintained a conversation with his housekeeper; not bad. The young woman who played the grave matron performed with great finish. She was a favourite, and was ever applauded. The second scene came; a saloon tastefully furnished; a table with flowers, arranged with grace; birds in cages, a lap-dog on a cushion; some books. The audience were pleased; especially the ladies: they like to recognise signs of *bon ton* in the details of the scene. A rather awful pause; and Mademoiselle Flora enters. She was greeted with even vehement approbation. Her agitation is extreme; she curtseys, and bows her head, as if to hide her face. The face was pleasing, and pretty enough; soft and engaging. Her figure slight and rather graceful. Nothing could be more perfect than her costume; purely white, but the fashion consummate; a single rose her only ornament. All admitted that her hair was arranged to admiration.

At length she spoke: her voice trembled, but she had a good elocution, though her organ wanted force. The gentlemen looked at each other, and nodded approbation. There was something so unobtrusive in her mien, that she instantly became a favourite with the ladies. The scene was not long, but it was successful.

Flora did not appear in the next scene. In the fourth and final one of the act, she had to make a grand display. It was a love-scene, and rather of an impassioned character; Villebecque was her suitor. He entered first on the stage. Never had he looked so well, or performed with more spirit. You would not have given him five-and-twenty years; he seemed redolent of youth. His dress, too, was admirable. He had studied the most distinguished of his audience for the occasion, and had outdone them all. The fact is, he had been assisted a little by a great connoisseur, a celebrated French nobleman, Count D——y, who had been one of the guests. The thing was perfect; and Lord Monmouth took a pinch of snuff, and tapped approbation on the top of his box.

Flora now re-appeared, received with renewed approbation. It did not seem, however, that in the interval she had gained courage; she looked agitated. She spoke, she proceeded with her part; it became impassioned. She had to speak of her feelings; to tell the secrets of her heart; to confess that she loved another: her emotion was exquisitely performed, the mournful tenderness of her tones thrilling. There was, throughout the audience, a dead silence; all were absorbed in their admiration of the unrivalled artist; all felt a new genius had visited the stage;—but while they were fascinated by the actress, the woman was in torture. The emotion was the disturbance of her own soul; the

mournful tenderness of her tones thrilled from the heart: suddenly she clasped her hands with all the exhaustion of woe; an expression of agony flitted over her countenance; and she burst into tears. Villebecque rushed forward, and carried, rather than led, her from the stage; the audience looking at each other, some of them suspecting that this movement was a part of the scene.

"She has talent," said Lord Monmouth to the Russian Ambassadress, "but wants practice. Villebecque should send her for a time to the provinces."

At length M. Villebecque came forward to express his deep regret that the sudden and severe indisposition of Mlle. Flora rendered it impossible for the company to proceed with the piece; but that the curtain would descend to rise again for the second and last piece announced.

All this accordingly took place. The experienced performer who acted the heroines now came forward and disported most jocundly. The failure of Flora had given fresh animation to her perpetual liveliness. She seemed the very soul of elegant frolic. In the last scene she figured in male attire; and in air, fashion, and youth, beat Villebecque out of the field. She looked younger than Coningsby when he went up to his grandpapa.

The comedy was over, the curtain fell; the audience, much amused, chattered brilliant criticism, and quitted the theatre to repair to the saloon, where they were to be diverted to-night with Russian dances. Nobody thought of the unhappy Flora; not a single message to console her in her grief, to compliment her on what she had done, to encourage her future. And yet it was a season for a word of kindness; so, at least, thought one of the audience, as he lingered behind the hurrying crowd, absorbed in their coming amusements.

Coningsby had sat very near the stage; he had observed, with great advantage and attention, the countenance and movements of Flora from the beginning. He was fully persuaded that her woe was genuine and profound. He had felt his eyes moist when she wept. He recoiled from the cruelty and the callousness that, without the slightest symptom of sympathy, could leave a young girl who had been labouring for their amusement, and who was suffering for her trial.

He got on the stage, ran behind the scenes, and asked for Mlle. Flora. They pointed to a door; he requested permission to enter. Flora was sitting at a table, with her face resting on her hands. Villebecque was there, resting on the edge of the tall fender, and still in the dress in which he had performed in the last piece.

"I took the liberty," said Coningsby, "of inquiring after Mlle. Flora;" and then advancing to her, who had raised her head, he

added, "I am sure my grandfather must feel much indebted to you, Mademoiselle, for making such exertions when you were suffering under so much indisposition."

"This is very amiable of you, sir," said the young lady, looking at him with earnestness.

"Mademoiselle has too much sensibility," said Villebecque, making an observation by way of diversion.

"And yet that must be the soul of fine acting," said Coningsby; "I look forward—all look forward—with great interest to the next occasion on which you will favour us."

"Never!" said La Petite, in a plaintive tone; "oh, I hope, never!"

"Mademoiselle is not aware at this moment," said Coningsby, "how much her talent is appreciated. I assure you, sir," he added, turning to Villebecque, "I heard but one opinion, but one expression of gratification at her feeling and her fine taste."

"The talent is hereditary," said Villebecque.

"Indeed you have reason to say so," said Coningsby.

"Pardon; I was not thinking of myself. My child reminded me so much of another this evening. But that is nothing. I am glad you are here, sir, to reassure Mademoiselle."

"I came only to congratulate her, and to lament, for our sakes as well as her own, her indisposition."

"It is not indisposition," said La Petite, in a low tone, with her eyes cast down.

"Mademoiselle cannot overcome the nervousness incidental to a first appearance," said Villebecque.

"A last appearance," said La Petite; "yes, it must be the last." She rose gently, she approached Villebecque, she laid her head on his breast, and placed her arms round his neck, "My father, my best father, yes, say it is the last!"

"You are the mistress of your lot, Flora," said Villebecque; "but with such a distinguished talent——"

"No, no, no; no talent. You are wrong, my father. I know myself. I am not of those to whom nature gives talents. I am born only for still life. I have no taste except for privacy. The convent is more suited to me than the stage."

"But you hear what this gentleman says," said Villebecque, returning her embrace. "He tells you that his grandfather—my Lord Marquess, I believe, sir,—that every one—that——"

"Oh, no, no, no!" said Flora, shaking her head. "He comes here because he is generous, because he is a gentleman; and he wished to soothe the soul that he knew was suffering. Thank him, my father, thank him for me and before me, and promise

in his presence that the stage and your daughter have parted for ever."

"Nay, Mademoiselle," said Coningsby, advancing and venturing to take her hand, a soft hand, "make no such resolutions to-night. M. Villebecque can have no other thought or object but your happiness: and, believe me, 'tis not I only, but all, who appreciate, and, if they were here, must respect you."

"I prefer respect to admiration," said Flora; "but I fear that respect is not the appanage of such as I am."

"All must respect those who respect themselves," said Coningsby. Adieu, Mademoiselle; I trust to-morrow to hear that you are yourself." He bowed to Villebecque and retired.

In the meantime, affairs in the drawing-room assumed a very different character to those behind the scenes. Coningsby returned to brilliancy, groups apparently gushing with light-heartedness, universal content, and Russian dances!

"And you too, do you dance the Russian dances, Mr. Coningsby?" said Madame Colonna.

"I cannot dance at all," said Coningsby, beginning a little to lose his pride in the want of an accomplishment which at Eton he had thought it spirited to despise.

"Ah! you cannot dance the Russian dances! Lucretia shall teach you," said the Princess; "nothing will please her so much."

On the present occasion the ladies were not as experienced in the entertainment as the gentlemen; but there was amusement in being instructed. To be disciplined by a Grand-duke or a Russian Princess was all very well; but what even the good-tempered Lady Gaythorpe could not pardon was, that a certain Mrs. Guy Flouncey, whom they were all of them trying to put down and to keep down, on this, as almost on every other occasion, proved herself a more finished performer than even the Russians themselves.

Lord Monmouth had picked up the Guy Flounceys during a Roman winter. They were people of some position in society. Mr. Guy Flouncey was a man of good estate, a sportsman, proud of his pretty wife. Mrs. Guy Flouncey was even very pretty, dressed in a style of ultra fashion. However, she could sing, dance, act, ride, and talk, and all well; and was mistress of the art of flirtation. She had amused the Marquess abroad, and had taken care to call at Monmouth House, the instant the "Morning Post" apprised her he had arrived in England; the consequence was an invitation to Coningsby. She came with a wardrobe which, in point of variety, fancy and fashion, never was surpassed. Morning and evening, every day a new dress equally striking; and a riding-habit that was the talk and wonder of the whole neigh-

bourhood. Mrs. Guy Flouncey created far more sensation in the borough when she rode down the High Street, than what the good people called the real Princesses.

At first the fine ladies never noticed her, or only stared at her over their shoulders; everywhere sounded, in suppressed whispers, the fatal question, "Who is she?" After dinner they formed always into polite groups, from which Mrs. Guy Flouncey was invariably excluded; and if ever the Princess Colonna, impelled partly by good-nature, and partly from having known her on the Continent, did kindly sit by her, Lady St. Julians, or some dame equally benevolent, was sure, by an adroit appeal to her Highness on some point which could not be decided without moving, to withdraw her from her pretty and persecuted companion.

It was, indeed, rather difficult work the first few days for Mrs. Guy Flouncey, especially immediately after dinner. It is not soothing to one's self-love to find oneself sitting alone, pretending to look at prints, in a fine drawing-room, full of fine people who don't speak to you. But Mrs. Guy Flouncey, after having taken Coningsby Castle by storm, was not to be driven out of its drawing-room by the tactics even of a Lady St. Julians. Experience convinced her that all that was required was a little patience. Mrs. Guy had confidence in herself, her quickness, her ever ready accomplishments, and her practised powers of attraction. And she was right. She was always sure of an ally the moment the gentlemen appeared. The cavalier who had sat next to her at dinner was only too happy to meet her again. More than once, too, she had caught her noble host, though a whole garrison was ever on the watch to prevent her, and he was greatly amused, and showed that he was greatly amused, by her society. Then she suggested plans to him to divert his guests. In a country-house the suggestive mind is inestimable. Somehow or other, before a week was passed, Mrs. Guy Flouncey seemed the soul of everything, was always surrounded by a cluster of admirers, and with what are called "the best men" ever ready to ride with her, dance with her, act with her, or fall at her feet. The fine ladies found it absolutely necessary to thaw: they began to ask her questions after dinner. Mrs. Guy Flouncey only wanted an opening. She was an adroit flatterer, with a temper imperturbable, and gifted with a ceaseless energy of conferring slight obligations. She lent them patterns for new fashions, in all which mysteries she was very versant; and what with some gentle glozing and some gay gossip, sugar for their tongues and salt for their tails, she contrived pretty well to catch them all.

CHAPTER IX.

NOTHING could present a greater contrast than the respective interiors of Coningsby and Beaumanoir. That air of habitual habitation, which so pleasingly distinguished the Duke's family seat, was entirely wanting at Coningsby. Everything, indeed, was vast and splendid; but it seemed rather a gala-house than a dwelling; as if the grand furniture and the grand servants had all come down express from town with the grand company, and were to disappear and to be dispersed at the same time. And truly there were very manifold traces of hasty and temporary arrangement; new carpets and old hangings; old paint, new gilding; battalions of odd French chairs, squadrons of queer English tables; and large tasteless lamps and tawdry chandeliers, evidently true cockneys, and only taking the air by way of change. There was, too, throughout the drawing-rooms an absence of all those minor articles of ornamental furniture that are the offering of taste to the home we love. There were no books either; no flowers; no pet animals; no portfolios of fine drawings by our English artists like the album of the Duchess, full of sketches by Landseer and Stanfield, and their gifted brethren; not a print even, except portfolios of H.B.'s caricatures. The modes and manners of the house were not rural; there was nothing of the sweet order of a country life. Nobody came down to breakfast; the ladies were scarcely seen until dinner-time; they rolled about in carriages together late in the afternoon as if they were in London, or led a sort of factitious boudoir life in their provincial dressing-rooms.

The Marquess sent for Coningsby the morning after his arrival, and asked him to breakfast with him in his private rooms. Nothing could be more kind or more agreeable than his grandfather. He appeared to be very interested in his grandson's progress, was glad to find Coningsby had distinguished himself at Eton, solemnly adjured him not to neglect his French. A classical education, he said, was a very admirable thing, and one which all gentlemen should enjoy; but Coningsby would find some day that there were two educations, one which his position required, and another which was demanded by the world. "French, my dear Harry," he continued, "is the key to this second education. In a couple of years or so you will enter the world; it's a different thing to what you read about. It's a masquerade; a motley, sparkling multitude, in which you may mark all forms and colours, and listen to all sentiments and opinions; but where all you see and hear has only one object—plunder. When you get into this crowd you will find that

Greek and Latin are not so much diffused as you imagine. I was glad to hear you speaking French yesterday. Study your accent. There are a good many foreigners here with whom you may try your wing a little; don't talk to any of them too much. Be very careful of intimacies. All the people here are good acquaintance; at least pretty well. Now, here," said the Marquess, taking up a letter and then throwing it on the table again, "now here is a man whom I should like you to know, Sidonia. He will be here in a few days. Lay yourself out for him if you have the opportunity. He is a man of rare capacity, and enormously rich. No one knows the world like Sidonia. I never met his equal; and 'tis so pleasant to talk with one that can want nothing of you."

Lord Monmouth had invited Coningsby to take a drive with him in the afternoon. The Marquess wished to show a part of his domain to the Ambassadress. Only Lucretia, he said, would be with them, and there was a place for him. This invitation was readily accepted by Coningsby, who was not yet sufficiently established in the habits of the house exactly to know how to pass his morning. His friend and patron, Mr. Rigby, was entirely taken up with the Grand-duke, whom he was accompanying all over the neighbourhood, in visits to manufactures, many of which Rigby himself saw for the first time, but all of which he fluently explained to his Imperial Highness. In return for this, he extracted much information from the Grand-duke on Russian plans and projects, materials for a "slashing" article against the Russophobia that he was preparing, and in which he was to prove that Muscovite aggression was an English interest, and entirely to be explained by the want of sea-coast, which drove the Czar, for the pure purposes of commerce, to the Baltic and the Euxine.

When the hour for the drive arrived, Coningsby found Lucretia, a young girl when he had first seen her only four years back, and still his junior, in that majestic dame who had conceded a superb recognition to him the preceding eve. She really looked older than Madame Colonna; who, very beautiful, very young-looking, and mistress of the real arts of the toilet, those that cannot be detected, was not in the least altered since she first so cordially saluted Coningsby as her dear young friend at Monmouth House.

The day was delightful, the park extensive and picturesque, the Ambassadress sparkling with anecdote, and occasionally, in a low voice, breathing a diplomatic hint to Lord Monmouth, who bowed his graceful consciousness of her distinguished confidence. Coningsby occasionally took advantage of one of those moments, when the conversation ceased to be general, to address Lucretia, who replied in calm, fine smiles, and in affable monosyllables. She indeed generally succeeded in conveying an impression to those

she addressed, that she had never seen them before, did not care to see them now, and never wished to see them again. And all this, too, with an air of great courtesy.

They arrived at the brink of a wooded bank; at their feet flowed a very fine river, deep and rushing, though not broad; its opposite bank the boundary of a richly-timbered park.

"Ah! this is beautiful!" exclaimed the Ambassadress. "And is that yours, Lord Monmouth?"

"Not yet," said the Marquess. "That is Hellingsley; it is one of the finest places in the county, with a splendid estate; not so considerable as Coningsby, but very great. It belongs to an old, a very old man, without a relative in the world. It is known that the estate will be sold at his death, which may be almost daily expected. Then it is mine. No one can offer for it what I can afford. For it gives me this division of the county, Princess. To possess Hellingsley is one of my objects." The Marquess spoke with an animation unusual with him, almost with a degree of excitement.

The wind met them as they returned, the breeze blew rather freshly. Lucretia all of a sudden seemed touched with unusual emotion. She was alarmed lest Lord Monmouth should catch cold; she took a kerchief from her own well-turned throat to tie round his neck. He feebly resisted, evidently much pleased.

The Princess Lucretia was highly accomplished. In the evening, having refused several distinguished guests, but instantly yielding to the request of Lord Monmouth, she sang. It was impossible to conceive a contralto of more thrilling power, or an execution more worthy of the voice. Coningsby, who was not experienced in fine singing, listened as if to a supernatural lay, but all agreed it was of the highest class of nature and of art; and the Grand-duke was in raptures. Lucretia received even his Highness' compliments with a graceful indifference. Indeed, to those who watched her demeanour, it might be remarked that she seemed to yield to none, although all bowed before her.

Madame Colonna, who was always extremely kind to Coningsby, expressed to him her gratification from the party of the morning. It must have been delightful, she assured Coningsby, for Lord Monmouth to have had both Lucretia and his grandson with him; and Lucretia too, she added, must have been so pleased.

Coningsby could not make out why Madame Colonna was always intimating to him that the Princess Lucretia took such great interest in his existence, looked forward with such gratification to his society, remembered with so much pleasure the past, anticipated so much happiness from the future. It appeared to him that he was to Lucretia, if not an object of repugnance, as he sometimes

fancied, certainly one only of absolute indifference; but he said nothing. He had already lived long enough to know that it is unwise to wish everything explained.

In the meantime, his life was agreeable. Every day, he found, added to his acquaintance. He was never without a companion to ride or to shoot with; and of riding Coningsby was very fond. His grandfather, too, was continually giving him good-natured turns, and making him of consequence in the Castle; so that all the guests were fully impressed with the importance of Lord Monmouth's grandson. Lady St. Julians pronounced him distinguished; the Ambassadress thought diplomacy should be his part, as he had a fine person and a clear brain; Madame Colonna spoke of him always as if she took intense interest in his career, and declared that she liked him almost as much as Lucretia did; the Russians persisted in always styling him "the young Marquess," notwithstanding the Ambassador's explanations; Mrs. Guy Flouncey made a dashing attack on him; but Coningsby remembered a lesson which Lady Everingham had graciously bestowed on him. He was not to be caught again easily. Besides, Mrs. Guy Flouncey laughed a little too much, and talked a little too loud.

As time flew on, there were changes of visitors, chiefly among the single men. At the end of the first week after Coningsby's arrival, Lord Eskdale appeared, bringing with him Lucian Gay; and soon after followed the Marquess of Beaumanoir and Mr. Melton. These were all heroes who, in their way, interested the ladies, and whose advent was hailed with general satisfaction. Even Lucretia would relax a little to Lord Eskdale. He was one of her oldest friends, and with a simplicity of manner which amounted almost to plainness, and with rather a cynical nonchalance in his carriage towards men, Lord Eskdale was invariably a favourite with women. To be sure his station was eminent; he was noble, and very rich, and very powerful, and these are qualities which tell as much with the softer as the harsher sex;—but there are individuals with all these qualities who are nevertheless unpopular with women. Lord Eskdale was easy, knew the world thoroughly, had no prejudices, and, above all, had a reputation for success. A reputation for success has as much influence with women, as a reputation for wealth has with men. Both reputations may be, and often are, unjust; but we see persons daily make good fortunes by them all the same. Lord Eskdale was not an impostor; and though he might not have been so successful a man had he not been Lord Eskdale, still, thrown over by a revolution, he would have lighted on his legs.

The arrival of this nobleman was the occasion of giving a good turn to poor Flora. He went immediately to see his friend Ville-

becque and his troop. Indeed it was a sort of society which pleased Lord Eskdale more than that which is deemed more refined. He was very sorry about "La Petite;" but thought that everything would come right in the long run; and told Villebecque that he was glad to hear him well spoken of here, especially by the Marquess, who seemed to take to him. As for Flora, he was entirely against her attempting the stage again, at least for the present, but as she was a good musician, he suggested to the Princess Lucretia one night, that the subordinate aid of Flora might be of service to her, and permit her to favour her friends with some pieces which otherwise she must deny to them. This suggestion was successful; Flora was introduced occasionally, soon often, to their parties in the evening, and her performances were in every respect satisfactory. There was nothing to excite jealousy of Lucretia either in her style or her person. And yet she sang well enough, and was a quiet, refined, retiring, by no means disagreeable person. She was the companion of Lucretia very often in the morning as well as in the illumined saloon; for the Princess was very devoted to the art in which she excelled. This connection on the whole contributed to the happiness of poor Flora. True it was, in the evening she often found herself sitting or standing alone and no one noticing her; she had no dazzling quality to attract men of fashion, who themselves love to worship ever the fashionable. Even their goddesses must be *à la mode*. But Coningsby never omitted an opportunity to show Flora some kindness under these circumstances. He always came and talked to her, and praised her singing, and would sometimes hand her refreshments and give her his arm if necessary. These slight attentions coming from the grandson of Lord Monmouth were for the world redoubled in their value; though Flora thought only of their essential kindness; all in character with that first visit which dwelt on the poor girl's memory, though it had long ago escaped that of her visitor. For in truth Coningsby had no other impulse for his conduct but kind-heartedness.

Thus we have attempted to give some faint idea how life glided away at the Castle the first fortnight that Coningsby passed there. Perhaps we ought not to omit that Mrs. Guy Flouncey, to the infinite disgust of Lady St. Julians, who had a daughter with her, successfully entrapped the devoted attentions of the young Marquess of Beaumanoir, who was never very backward if a lady would take trouble enough; while his friend, Mr. Melton, whose barren homage Lady St. Julians wished her daughter ever particularly to shun, employed all his gaiety, good-humour, frivolity, and fashion, in amusing that young lady, and with irresistible effect. For the rest, they continued, though they had only partridges to shoot, to

pass the morning without weariness. The weather was fine; the stud numerous; all might be mounted. The Grand-duke and his suite, guided by Mr. Rigby, had always some objects to visit, and railroads returned them just in time for the banquet with an appetite which they had earned, and during which Rigby recounted their achievements, and his own opinions.

The dinner was always first-rate; the evening never failed; music, dancing, and the theatre, offered great resources independent of the soul-subduing sentiment harshly called flirtation, and which is the spell of a country-house. Lord Monmouth was satisfied, for he had scarcely ever felt wearied. All that he required in life was to be amused; perhaps that was not all he required, but it was indispensable. Nor was it wonderful that on the present occasion he obtained his purpose, for there were half a hundred of the brightest eyes and quickest brains ever on the watch or the whirl, to secure him distraction. The only circumstance that annoyed him was the non-arrival of Sidonia. Lord Monmouth could not bear to be disappointed. He could not refrain from saying, notwithstanding all the resources and all the exertions of his guests,—

"I cannot understand why Sidonia does not come. I wish Sidonia were here."

"So do I," said Lord Eskdale; "Sidonia is the only man who tells one anything new."

"We saw Sidonia at Lord Studcaster's," said Lord Beaumanoir. "He told Melton he was coming here."

"You know he has bought all Studcaster's horses," said Mr. Melton.

"I wonder he does not buy Studcaster himself," said Lord Monmouth, "I would if I were he; Sidonia can buy anything:" he turned to Mrs. Guy Flouncey.

"I wonder who Sidonia is," thought Mrs. Guy Flouncey, but she was determined no one should suppose she did not know.

At length one day Coningsby met Madame Colonna in the vestibule before dinner.

"Milor is in such good temper, Mr. Coningsby," she said; "Monsieur de Sidonia has arrived."

About ten minutes before dinner there was a stir in the chamber. Coningsby looked round. He saw the Grand-duke advancing, and holding out his hand in a manner the most gracious. A gentleman, of distinguished air, but with his back turned to Coningsby, was bowing as he received his Highness' greeting. There was a general pause in the room. Several came forward: even the Marquess seemed a little moved. Coningsby could not resist the impulse of curiosity to see this individual of whom he had heard

so much. He glided round the room, and caught the countenance of his companion in the forest inn; he who announced to him, that "the Age of Ruins was past."

CHAPTER X.

SIDONIA was descended from a very ancient and noble family of Arragon, that, in the course of ages, had given to the state many distinguished citizens. In the priesthood its members had been peculiarly eminent. Besides several prelates, they counted among their number an Archbishop of Toledo; and a Sidonia, in a season of great danger and difficulty, had exercised for a series of years the paramount office of Grand Inquisitor.

Yet, strange as it may sound, it is nevertheless a fact, of which there is no lack of evidence, that this illustrious family during all this period, in common with two-thirds of the Arragonese nobility, secretly adhered to the ancient faith and ceremonies of their fathers —a belief in the unity of the God of Sinai, and the rites and observances of the laws of Moses.

Whence came those Hebrew Arabs whose passage across the strait from Africa to Europe long preceded the invasion of the Mahomedan Arabs, it is now impossible to ascertain. Their traditions tell us that from time immemorial they had sojourned in Africa; and it is not improbable that they may have been the descendants of some of the earlier dispersions; like those Hebrew colonies that we find in China, and who probably emigrated from Persia in the days of the great monarchies. Whatever may have been their origin in Africa, their fortunes in Southern Europe are not difficult to trace, though the annals of no race in any age can detail a history of such strange vicissitudes, or one rife with more touching and romantic incident. Their unexampled prosperity in the Spanish Peninsula, and especially in the south, where they had become the principal cultivators of the soil, excited the jealousy of the Goths; and the Councils of Toledo during the sixth and seventh centuries attempted, by a series of decrees worthy of the barbarians who promulgated them, to root the Jewish Arabs out of the land. There is no doubt the Council of Toledo led, as directly as the lust of Roderick, to the invasion of Spain by the Moslemin Arabs. The Jewish population, suffering under the most sanguinary and atrocious persecution, looked to their sympathising brethren of the Crescent, whose camps already gleamed on the opposite shore. The overthrow of the Gothic kingdoms was as much achieved by the superior information which the Saracens received from their suffering kinsmen, as by the resistless valour

of the Desert. The Saracen kingdoms were established. That fair and unrivalled civilisation arose which preserved for Europe arts and letters when Christendom was plunged in darkness. The children of Ishmael rewarded the children of Israel with equal rights and privileges with themselves. During these halcyon centuries, it is difficult to distinguish the follower of Moses from the votary of Mahomet. Both alike built palaces, gardens, and fountains; filled equally the highest offices of the state, competed in an extensive and enlightened commerce, and rivalled each other in renowned universities.

Even after the fall of the principal Moorish kingdoms, the Jews of Spain were still treated by the conquering Goths with tenderness and consideration. Their numbers, their wealth, the fact that, in Arragon especially, they were the proprietors of the soil, and surrounded by warlike and devoted followers, secured for them an usage which, for a considerable period, made them little sensible of the change of dynasties and religions. But the tempest gradually gathered. As the Goths grew stronger, persecution became more bold. Where the Jewish population was scanty they were deprived of their privileges, or obliged to conform under the title of "Nuevos Christianos." At length the union of the two crowns under Ferdinand and Isabella, and the fall of the last Moorish kingdom, brought the crisis of their fate both to the New Christian and the non-conforming Hebrew. The Inquisition appeared—the Institution that had exterminated the Albigenses and had desolated Languedoc, and which it should ever be remembered was established in the Spanish kingdoms against the protests of the Cortes and amid the terror of the populace. The Dominicans opened their first tribunal at Seville, and it is curious that the first individuals they summoned before them were the Duke of Medina Sidonia, the Marquess of Cadiz, and the Count of Arcos; three of the most considerable personages in Spain. How many were burned alive at Seville during the first year, how many imprisoned for life, what countless thousands were visited with severe though lighter punishments, need not be recorded here. In nothing was the Holy Office more happy than in multiform and subtle means by which they tested the sincerity of the New Christians.

At length the Inquisition was to be extended to Arragon. The high-spirited nobles of that kingdom knew that its institution was for them a matter of life or death. The Cortes of Arragon appealed to the King and to the Pope; they organised an extensive conspiracy; the chief Inquisitor was assassinated in the cathedral of Saragossa. Alas! it was fated that in this, one of the many, and continual, and continuing struggles between the rival organisations of the North and the South, the children of the sun

should fall. The fagot and the San Benito were the doom of the nobles of Arragon. Those who were convicted of secret Judaism, and this scarcely three centuries ago, were dragged to the stake; the sons of the noblest houses, in whose veins the Hebrew taint could be traced, had to walk in solemn procession, singing psalms, and confessing their faith in the religion of the fell Torquemada.

This triumph in Arragon, the almost simultaneous fall of the last Moorish kingdom, raised the hopes of the pure Christians to the highest pitch. Having purged the new Christians, they next turned their attention to the old Hebrews. Ferdinand was resolved that the delicious air of Spain should be breathed no longer by any one who did not profess the Catholic faith. Baptism or exile was the alternative. More than six hundred thousand individuals (some authorities greatly increase the amount), the most industrious, the most intelligent, and the most enlightened of Spanish subjects, would not desert the religion of their fathers. For this they gave up the delightful land wherein they had lived for centuries, the beautiful cities they had raised, the universities from which Christendom drew for ages its most precious lore, the tombs of their ancestors, the temples where they had worshipped the God for whom they had made this sacrifice. They had but four months to prepare for eternal exile, after a residence of as many centuries; during which brief period forced sales and glutted markets virtually confiscated their property. It is a calamity that the scattered nation still ranks with the desolations of Nebuchadnezzar and of Titus. Who after this should say the Jews are by nature a sordid people? But the Spanish Goth, then so cruel and so haughty, where is he? A despised suppliant to the very race which he banished, for some miserable portion of the treasure which their habits of industry have again accumulated. Where is that tribunal that summoned Medina Sidonia and Cadiz to its dark inquisition? Where is Spain? Its fall, its unparalleled and its irremediable fall, is mainly to be attributed to the expulsion of that large portion of its subjects, the most industrious and intelligent, who traced their origin to the Mosaic and Mahomedan Arabs.

The Sidonias of Arragon were Nuevos Christianos. Some of them, no doubt, were burned alive at the end of the fifteenth century, under the system of Torquemada; many of them, doubtless, wore the San Benito; but they kept their titles and estates, and in time reached those great offices to which we have referred.

During the long disorders of the Peninsular war, when so many openings were offered to talent, and so many opportunities seized by the adventurous, a cadet of a younger branch of this family made a large fortune by military contracts, and supplying the

commissariat of the different armies. At the peace, prescient of the great financial future of Europe, confident in the fertility of his own genius, in his original views of fiscal subjects, and his knowledge of national resources, this Sidonia, feeling that Madrid, or even Cadiz, could never be a base on which the monetary transactions of the world could be regulated, resolved to emigrate to England, with which he had, in the course of years, formed considerable commercial connections. He arrived here after the peace of Paris, with his large capital. He staked all that he was worth on the Waterloo loan; and the event made him one of the greatest capitalists in Europe.

No sooner was Sidonia established in England than he professed Judaism; which Torquemada flattered himself, with the fagot and the San Benito, he had drained out of the veins of his family more than three centuries ago. He sent over, also, for several of his brothers, who were as good Catholics in Spain as Ferdinand and Isabella could have possibly desired, but who made an offering in the synagogue, in gratitude for their safe voyage, on their arrival in England.

Sidonia had foreseen in Spain that, after the exhaustion of a war of twenty-five years, Europe must require capital to carry on peace. He reaped the due reward of his sagacity. Europe did require money, and Sidonia was ready to lend it to Europe. France wanted some; Austria more; Prussia a little; Russia a few millions. Sidonia could furnish them all. The only country which he avoided was Spain; he was too well acquainted with its resources Nothing, too, would ever tempt him to lend anything to the revolted colonies of Spain. Prudence saved him from being a creditor of the mother-country; his Spanish pride recoiled from the rebellion of her children.

It is not difficult to conceive that, after having pursued the career we have intimated for about ten years, Sidonia had become one of the most considerable personages in Europe. He had established a brother, or a near relative, in whom he could confide, in most of the principal capitals. He was lord and master of the money-market of the world, and of course virtually lord and master of everything else. He literally held the revenues of Southern Italy in pawn; and monarchs and ministers of all countries courted his advice and were guided by his suggestions. He was still in the vigour of life, and was not a mere money-making machine. He had a general intelligence equal to his position, and looked forward to the period when some relaxation from his vast enterprises and exertions might enable him to direct his energies to great objects of public benefit. But in the height of his vast prosperity he suddenly died, leaving only one child, a youth still of tender years,

and heir to the greatest fortune in Europe, so great, indeed, that it could only be calculated by millions.

Shut out from universities and schools, those universities and schools which were indebted for their first knowledge of ancient philosophy, to the learning and enterprise of his ancestors, the young Sidonia was fortunate in the tutor whom his father had procured for him, and who devoted to his charge all the resources of his trained intellect and vast and various erudition. A Jesuit before the revolution; since then an exiled Liberal leader; now a member of the Spanish Cortes; Rebello was always a Jew. He found in his pupil that precocity of intellectual development which is characteristic of the Arabian organisation. The young Sidonia penetrated the highest mysteries of mathematics with a facility almost instinctive; while a memory, which never had any twilight hours, but always reflected a noontide clearness, seemed to magnify his acquisitions of ancient learning by the promptness with which they could be reproduced and applied.

The circumstances of his position, too, had early contributed to give him an unusual command over the modern languages. An Englishman, and taught from his cradle to be proud of being an Englishman, he first evinced in speaking his native language those remarkable powers of expression, and that clear and happy elocution, which ever afterwards distinguished him. But the son of a Spaniard, the sonorous syllables of that noble tongue constantly resounded in his ear; while the foreign guests who thronged his father's mansion habituated him from an early period of life to the tones of languages that were not long strange to him. When he was nineteen, Sidonia, who had then resided some time with his uncle at Naples, and had made a long visit to another of his father's relatives at Frankfort, possessed a complete mastery over the principal European languages.

At seventeen he had parted with Rebello, who returned to Spain, and Sidonia, under the control of his guardians, commenced his travels. He resided, as we have mentioned, some time in Germany, and then, having visited Italy, settled at Naples, at which city it may be said he made his entrance into life. With a very interesting person, and highly accomplished, he availed himself of the gracious attentions of a Court of which he was principal creditor; and which, treating him as a distinguished English traveller, were enabled perhaps to show him some favours that the manners of the country might not have permitted them to accord to his Neapolitan relatives. Sidonia thus obtained at a very early age that experience of refined and luxurious society, which is a necessary part of a finished education. It gives the last polish to the manners; it teaches us something of the power of the pas-

sions, early developed in the hot-bed of self-indulgence; it instils into us that indefinable tact seldom obtained in later life, which prevents us from saying the wrong thing, and often impels us to do the right.

Between Paris and Naples Sidonia passed two years, spent apparently in the dissipation which was perhaps inseparable from his time of life. He was admired by women, to whom he was magnificent, idolised by artists, whom he patronised, received in all circles with great distinction, and appreciated for his intellect by the very few to whom he at all opened himself. For, though affable and gracious, it was impossible to penetrate him. Though very unreserved in his manner, his frankness was strictly limited to the surface. He observed everything, thought ever, but avoided serious discussion. If you pressed him for an opinion, he took refuge in raillery, or threw out some grave paradox with which it was not easy to cope.

The moment he came of age, Sidonia, having previously, at a great family congress held at Naples, made arrangements with the heads of the houses that bore his name respecting the disposition and management of his vast fortune, quitted Europe.

Sidonia was absent from his connections for five years, during which period he never communicated with them. They were aware of his existence only by the orders which he drew on them for payment, and which arrived from all quarters of the globe. It would appear from these documents that he had dwelt a considerable time in the Mediterranean regions; penetrated Nilotic Africa to Sennaar and Abyssinia; traversed the Asiatic continent to Tartary, whence he had visited Hindostan, and the isles of that Indian sea which are so little known. Afterwards he was heard tell of at Valparaiso, the Brazils, and Lima. He evidently remained some time at Mexico, which he quitted for the United States. One morning, without notice, he arrived in London.

Sidonia had exhausted all the sources of human knowledge; he was master of the learning of every nation, of all tongues dead or living, of every literature, Western and Oriental. He had pursued the speculations of science to their last term, and had himself illustrated them by observation and experiment. He had lived in all orders of society, had viewed every combination of Nature and of Art, and had observed man under every phasis of civilisation. He had even studied him in the wilderness. The influence of creeds and laws, manners, customs, traditions, in all their diversities, had been subjected to his personal scrutiny.

He brought to the study of this vast aggregate of knowledge a penetrative intellect that, matured by long meditation, and assisted by that absolute freedom from prejudice, which was the compensa-

tory possession of a man without a country, permitted Sidonia to fathom, as it were by intuition, the depth of questions apparently the most difficult and profound. He possessed the rare faculty of communicating with precision ideas the most abstruse, and in general a power of expression which arrests and satisfies attention.

With all this knowledge, which no one knew more to prize, with boundless wealth, and with an athletic frame, which sickness had never tried, and which had avoided excess, Sidonia nevertheless looked upon life with a glance rather of curiosity than content. His religion walled him out from the pursuits of a citizen; his riches deprived him of the stimulating anxieties of a man. He perceived himself a lone being, alike without cares and without duties.

To a man in his position there might yet seem one unfailing source of felicity and joy; independent of creed, independent of country, independent even of character. He might have discovered that perpetual spring of happiness in the sensibility of the heart. But this was a sealed fountain to Sidonia. In his organisation there was a peculiarity, perhaps a great deficiency. He was a man without affections. It would be harsh to say he had no heart, for he was susceptible of deep emotions, but not for individuals. He was capable of rebuilding a town that was burned down; of restoring a colony that had been destroyed by some awful visitation of Nature; of redeeming to liberty a horde of captives; and of doing these great acts in secret; for, void of all self-love, public approbation was worthless to him; but the individual never touched him. Woman was to him a toy, man a machine.

The lot the most precious to man, and which a beneficent Providence has made not the least common; to find in another heart a perfect and profound sympathy; to unite his existence with one who could share all his joys, soften all his sorrows, aid him in all his projects, respond to all his fancies, counsel him in his cares, and support him in his perils; make life charming by her charms, interesting by her intelligence, and sweet by the vigilant variety of her tenderness; to find your life blessed by such an influence, and to feel that your influence can bless such a life: this lot, the most divine of divine gifts, that power and even fame can never rival in its delights—all this Nature had denied to Sidonia.

With an imagination as fiery as his native Desert, and an intellect as luminous as his native sky, he wanted, like that land, those softening dews without which the soil is barren, and the sunbeam as often a messenger of pestilence as an angel of regenerative grace.

Such a temperament, though rare, is peculiar to the East. It inspired the founder of the great monarchies of antiquity, the prophets that the Desert has sent forth, the Tartar chiefs who

have overrun the world; it might be observed in the great Corsican, who, like most of the inhabitants of the Mediterranean isles, had probably Arab blood in his veins. It is a temperament that befits conquerors and legislators, but, in ordinary times and ordinary situations, entails on its possessor only eccentric aberrations or profound melancholy.

The only human quality that interested Sidonia was Intellect. He cared not whence it came; where it was to be found: creed, country, class, character, in this respect, were alike indifferent to him. The author, the artist, the man of science, never appealed to him in vain. Often he anticipated their wants and wishes. He encouraged their society; was as frank in his conversation as he was generous in his contributions; but the instant they ceased to be authors, artists, or philosophers, and their communications arose from anything but the intellectual quality which had originally interested him, the moment they were rash enough to approach intimacy and appealed to the sympathising man, instead of the congenial intelligence, he saw them no more. It was not however intellect merely in these unquestionable shapes that commanded his notice. There was not an adventurer in Europe with whom he was not familiar. No Minister of State had such communication with secret agents and political spies as Sidonia. He held relations with all the clever outcasts of the world. The catalogue of his acquaintance in the shape of Greeks, Armenians, Moors, secret Jews, Tartars, Gipsies, wandering Poles and Carbonari, would throw a curious light on those subterranean agencies of which the world in general knows so little, but which exercise so great an influence on public events. His extensive travels, his knowledge of languages, his daring and adventurous disposition, and his unlimited means, had given him opportunities of becoming acquainted with these characters, in general so difficult to trace, and of gaining their devotion. To these sources he owed that knowledge of strange and hidden things which often startled those who listened to him. Nor was it easy, scarcely possible, to deceive him. Information reached him from so many, and such contrary quarters, that with his discrimination and experience, he could almost instantly distinguish the truth. The secret history of the world was his pastime. His great pleasure was to contrast the hidden motive, with the public pretext, of transactions.

One source of interest Sidonia found in his descent and in the fortunes of his race. As firm in his adherence to the code of the great Legislator as if the trumpet still sounded on Sinai, he might have received in the conviction of divine favour an adequate compensation for human persecution. But there were other and more terrestrial considerations that made Sidonia proud of his

origin, and confident in the future of his kind. Sidonia was a great philosopher, who took comprehensive views of human affairs, and surveyed every fact in its relative position to other facts, the only mode of obtaining truth.

Sidonia was well aware that in the five great varieties into which Physiology has divided the human species; to wit, the Caucasian, the Mongolian, the Malayan, the American, the Ethiopian; the Arabian tribes rank in the first and superior class, together, among others, with the Saxon and the Greek. This fact alone is a source of great pride and satisfaction to the animal Man. But Sidonia and his brethren could claim a distinction which the Saxon and the Greek, and the rest of the Caucasian nations, have forfeited. The Hebrew is an unmixed race. Doubtless, among the tribes who inhabit the bosom of the Desert, progenitors alike of the Mosaic and the Mahomedan Arabs, blood may be found as pure as that of the descendants of the Scheik Abraham. But the Mosaic Arabs are the most ancient, if not the only, unmixed blood that dwells in cities.

An unmixed race of a first-rate organisation are the aristocracy of Nature. Such excellence is a positive fact; not an imagination, a ceremony, coined by poets, blazoned by cozening heralds, but perceptible in its physical advantages, and in the vigour of its unsullied idiosyncrasy.

In his comprehensive travels, Sidonia had visited and examined the Hebrew communities of the world. He had found, in general, the lower orders debased; the superior immersed in sordid pursuits; but he perceived that the intellectual development was not impaired. This gave him hope. He was persuaded that organisation would outlive persecution. When he reflected on what they had endured, it was only marvellous that the race had not disappeared. They had defied exile, massacre, spoliation, the degrading influence of the constant pursuit of gain; they had defied Time. For nearly three thousand years, according to Archbishop Usher, they have been dispersed over the globe. To the unpolluted current of their Caucasian structure, and to the segregating genius of their great Lawgiver, Sidonia ascribed the fact that they had not been long ago absorbed among those mixed races, who presume to persecute them, but who periodically wear away and disappear, while their victims still flourish in all the primeval vigour of the pure Asian breed.

Shortly after his arrival in England, Sidonia repaired to the principal courts of Europe, that he might become personally acquainted with the monarchs and ministers of whom he had heard so much. His position insured him a distinguished reception; his personal qualities immediately made him cherished. He

could please; he could do more—he could astonish. He could throw out a careless observation which would make the oldest diplomatist start; a winged word that gained him the consideration, sometimes the confidence, of Sovereigns. When he had fathomed the intelligence which governs Europe, and which can only be done by personal acquaintance, he returned to this country.

The somewhat hard and literal character of English life suited one who shrank from sensibility, and often took refuge in sarcasm. Its masculine vigour and active intelligence occupied and interested his mind. Sidonia, indeed, was exactly the character who would be welcomed in our circles. His immense wealth, his unrivalled social knowledge, his clear vigorous intellect, the severe simplicity of his manners, frank, but neither claiming nor brooking familiarity, and his devotion to field-sports, which was the safety-valve of his energy, were all circumstances and qualities which the English appreciate and admire; and it may be fairly said of Sidonia that few men were more popular, and none less understood.

CHAPTER XI.

At dinner, Coningsby was seated on the same side as Sidonia, and distant from him. There had been, therefore, no mutual recognition. Another guest had also arrived, Mr. Ormsby. He came straight from London, full of rumours, had seen Tadpole, who, hearing he was on the wing for Coningsby Castle, had taken him into a dark corner of his club, and shown him his book, a very safe piece of confidence, as Mr. Ormsby was very near-sighted. It was, however, to be received as an undoubted fact, that all was right, and somehow or other, before very long, there would be national demonstration of the same. This arrival of Mr. Ormsby, and the news that he bore, gave a political turn to the conversation after the ladies had left the room.

"Tadpole wants me to stand for Birmingham," said Mr. Ormsby, gravely.

"You!" exclaimed Lord Monmouth, and, throwing himself back in his chair, he broke into a real, hearty laugh.

"Yes; the Conservatives mean to start two candidates; a manufacturer they have got, and they have written up to Tadpole for a 'West-end man.'".

"A what?"

"A West-end man, who will make the ladies patronise their fancy articles."

"The result of the Reform Bill, then," said Lucian Gay, "will be to give Manchester a bishop, and Birmingham a dandy."

"I begin to believe the result will be very different to what we expected," said Lord Monmouth.

Mr. Rigby shook his head and was going to prophesy, when Lord Eskdale, who liked talk to be short, and was of opinion that Rigby should keep his amplifications for his slashing articles, put in a brief careless observation, which balked his inspiration.

"Certainly," said Mr. Ormsby, "when the guns were firing over Vyvyan's last speech and confession, I never expected to be asked to stand for Birmingham."

"Perhaps you may be called up to the other House by the title," said Lucian Gay. "Who knows?"

"I agree with Tadpole," said Mr. Ormsby, "that if we only stick to the Registration the country is saved."

"Fortunate country!" said Sidonia, "that can be saved by a good registration!"

"I believe, after all, that with property and pluck," said Lord Monmouth, "Parliamentary Reform is not such a very bad thing."

Here several gentlemen began talking at the same time, all agreeing with their host, and proving in their different ways, the irresistible influence of property and pluck;—property in Lord Monmouth's mind meaning vassals; and pluck a total disregard for public opinion. Mr. Guy Flouncey, who wanted to get into Parliament, but why nobody knew, who had neither political abilities nor political opinions, but had some floating idea that it would get himself and his wife to some more balls and dinners, and who was duly ticketed for "a good thing" in the candidate list of the Tadpoles and the Tapers, was of opinion that an immense deal might be done by properly patronising borough races. That was his specific how to prevent revolution.

Taking advantage of a pause, Lord Monmouth said, "I should like to know what you think of this question, Sidonia."

"I am scarcely a competent judge," he said, as if wishing to disclaim any interference in the conversation, and then added, "but I have been ever of opinion that revolutions are not to be evaded."

"Exactly my views," said Mr. Rigby, eagerly; "I say it now, I have said it a thousand times, you may doctor the registration as you like, but you can never get rid of Schedule A."

"Is there a person in this room who can now tell us the names of the boroughs in Schedule A?" said Sidonia.

"I am sure I cannot," said Lord Monmouth, "though six of them belonged to myself."

"But the principle," said Mr. Rigby; "they represented a principle."

"Nothing else, certainly," said Lucian Gay.

"And what principle?" inquired Sidonia.

"The principle of nomination."

"That is a practice, not a principle," said Sidonia. "Is it a practice that no longer exists?"

"You think then," said Lord Eskdale, cutting in before Rigby, "that the Reform Bill has done us no harm?"

"It is not the Reform Bill that has shaken the aristocracy of this country, but the means by which that Bill was carried," replied Sidonia.

"Physical force?" said Lord Eskdale.

"Or social power?" said Sidonia.

Upon this, Mr. Rigby, impatient at any one giving the tone in a political discussion but himself, and chafing under the vigilance of Lord Eskdale, which to him ever appeared only fortuitous, violently assaulted the argument, and astonished several country gentlemen present by his volubility. They at length listened to real eloquence. At the end of a long appeal to Sidonia, that gentleman only bowed his head and said, "Perhaps;" and then turning to his neighbour, inquired whether birds were plentiful in Lancashire this season; so that Mr. Rigby was reduced to the necessity of forming the political opinions of Mr. Guy Flouncey.

As the gentlemen left the dining-room, Coningsby, though at some distance, was observed by Sidonia, who stopped instantly, then advanced to Coningsby, and extending his hand said, "I said we should meet again, though I hardly expected so quickly."

"And I hope we shall not separate so soon," said Coningsby; "I was much struck with what you said just now about the Reform Bill. Do you know that the more I think the more I am perplexed by what is meant by Representation?"

"It is a principle of which a limited definition is only current in this country," said Sidonia, quitting the room with him. "People may be represented without periodical elections of neighbours who are incapable to maintain their interests, and strangers who are unwilling."

The entrance of the gentlemen produced the same effect on the saloon as sunrise on the world; universal animation, a general though gentle stir. The Grand-duke, bowing to every one, devoted himself to the daughter of Lady St. Julians, who herself pinned Lord Beaumanoir before he could reach Mrs. Guy Flouncey. Coningsby instead talked nonsense to that lady. Brilliant cavaliers, including Mr. Melton, addressed a band of beautiful damsels grouped on a large ottoman. Everywhere sounded a delicious

murmur, broken occasionally by a silver-sounding laugh not too loud. Sidonia and Lord Eskdale did not join the ladies. They stood for a few moments in conversation, and then threw themselves on a sofa.

"Who is that?" asked Sidonia of his companion rather earnestly, as Coningsby quitted them.

"'Tis the grandson of Monmouth; young Coningsby."

"Ah! The new generation then promises. I met him once before, by chance; he interests me."

"They tell me he is a lively lad. He is a prodigious favourite here, and I should not be surprised if Monmouth made him his heir."

"I hope he does not dream of inheritance," said Sidonia. "'Tis the most enervating of visions."

"Do you admire Lady Augustina St. Julians?" said Mrs. Guy Flouncey to Coningsby.

"I admire no one except yourself."

"Oh! how very gallant, Mr. Coningsby!"

"When should men be gallant, if not to the brilliant and the beautiful?" said Coningsby.

"Ah! you are laughing at me."

"No, I am not. I am quite grave."

"Your eyes laugh. Now tell me, Mr. Coningsby, Lord Henry Sydney is a very great friend of yours?"

"Very."

"He is very amiable."

"Very."

"He does a great deal for the poor at Beaumanoir. A very fine place, is it not?"

"Very."

"As fine as Coningsby?"

"At present, with Mrs. Guy Flouncey at Coningsby, Beaumanoir would have no chance."

"Ah! you laugh at me again! Now tell me, Mr. Coningsby, what do you think we shall do to-night? I look upon you, you know, as the real arbiter of our destinies."

"You shall decide," said Coningsby.

"Mon cher Harry," said Madame Colonna, coming up, "they wish Lucretia to sing, and she will not. You must ask her, she cannot refuse you."

"I assure you she can," said Coningsby.

"Mon cher Harry, your grandpapa did desire me to beg you to ask her to sing."

So Coningsby unwillingly approached Lucretia, who was talking with the Russian Ambassador.

"I am sent upon a fruitless mission," said Coningsby, looking at her, and catching her glance.

"What, and why?" she replied.

"The mission is to entreat you to do us all a great favour: and the cause of its failure will be, that I am the envoy."

"If the favour be one to yourself, it is granted; and if you be the envoy, you need never fear failure with me."

"I must presume then to lead you away," said Coningsby, bending to the Ambassador.

"Remember," said Lucretia, as they approached the instrument, "that I am singing to you."

"It is impossible ever to forget it," said Coningsby, leading her to the piano with great politeness, but only with great politeness.

"Where is Mademoiselle Flora?" she inquired.

Coningsby found "La Petite" crouching as it were behind some furniture, and apparently looking over some music. She looked up as he approached, and a smile stole over her countenance. "I am come to ask a favour," he said, and he named his request.

"I will sing," she replied; "but only tell me what you like."

Coningsby felt the difference between the courtesy of the head and of the heart, as he contrasted the manner of Lucretia and Flora. Nothing could be more exquisitely gracious than the daughter of Colonna was to-night; Flora, on the contrary, was rather agitated and embarrassed; and did not express her readiness with half the facility and the grace of Lucretia; but Flora's arm trembled as Coningsby led her to the piano.

Meantime Lord Eskdale and Sidonia are in deep converse.

"Hah! that is a fine note!" said Sidonia, and he looked round. "Who is that singing? Some new *protégée* of Lord Monmouth?"

"'Tis the daughter of the Colonnas," said Lord Eskdale, "the Princess Lucretia."

"Why, she was not at dinner to-day."

"No, she was not there."

"My favourite voice; and of all, the rarest to be found. When I was a boy, it made me almost in love even with Pisaroni."

"Well, the Princess is scarcely more lovely. 'Tis a pity the plumage is not as beautiful as the note. She is plain."

"No; not plain with that brow."

"Well, I rather admire her myself," said Lord Eskdale. "She has fine points."

"Let us approach," said Sidonia.

The song ceased, Lord Eskdale advanced, made his compliments, and then said, "You were not at dinner to-day."

"Why should I be?" said the Princess.

"For our sakes, for mine, if not for your own," said Lord Eskdale, smiling. "Your absence has been remarked, and felt, I assure you, by others as well as myself. There is my friend Sidonia so enraptured with your thrilling tones, that he has abruptly closed a conversation which I have been long counting on. Do you know him? May I present him to you?"

And having obtained a consent, not often conceded, Lord Eskdale looked round, and calling Sidonia, he presented his friend to the Princess.

"You are fond of music, Lord Eskdale tells me?" said Lucretia.

"When it is excellent," said Sidonia.

"But that is so rare," said the Princess.

"And precious as Paradise," said Sidonia. "As for indifferent music, 'tis Purgatory; but when it is bad, for my part I feel myself——"

"Where?" said Lord Eskdale.

"In the last circle of the Inferno," said Sidonia.

Lord Eskdale turned to Flora.

"And in what circle do you place us who are here?" the Princess inquired of Sidonia.

"One too polished for his verse," replied her companion.

"You mean too insipid," said the Princess. "I wish that life were a little more Dantesque."

"There is not less treasure in the world," said Sidonia, "because we use paper currency; and there is not less passion than of old, though it is *bon ton* to be tranquil."

"Do you think so?" said the Princess, inquiringly, and then looking round the apartment. "Have these automata, indeed, souls?"

"Some of them," said Sidonia. "As many as would have had souls in the fourteenth century."

"I thought they were wound up every day," said the Princess.

"Some are self-impelling," said Sidonia.

"And you can tell at a glance?" inquired the Princess. "You are one of those who can read human nature?"

"'Tis a book open to all."

"But if they cannot read?"

"Those must be your automata."

"Lord Monmouth tells me you are a great traveller?"

I have not discovered a new world."

"But you have visited it?"

"It is getting old."

"I would sooner recall the old than discover the new," said the Princess.

"We have both of us cause," said Sidonia. "Our names are the names of the Past."

"I do not love a world of Utility," said the Princess.

"You prefer to be celebrated to being comfortable," said Sidonia.

"It seems to me that the world is withering under routine."

"'Tis the inevitable lot of humanity," said Sidonia. "Man must ever be the slave of routine; but in old days it was a routine of great thoughts, and now it is a routine of little ones."

The evening glided on; the dance succeeded the song; the ladies were fast vanishing; Coningsby himself was meditating a movement, when Lord Beaumanoir, as he passed him, said, "Come to Lucian Gay's room; we are going to smoke a cigar."

This was a favourite haunt, towards midnight, of several of the younger members of the party at the Castle, who loved to find relaxation from the decorous gravities of polished life in the fumes of tobacco, the inspiration of whiskey toddy, and the infinite amusement of Lucian Gay's conversation and company. This was the genial hour when the good story gladdened, the pun flashed, and the song sparkled with jolly mirth or saucy mimicry. To-night, being Coningsby's initiation, there was a special general meeting of the Grumpy Club, in which everybody was to say the gayest things with the gravest face, and every laugh carried a forfeit. Lucian was the inimitable president. He told a tale for which he was famous, of "the very respectable county family who had been established in the shire for several generations, but who (it was a fact) had been ever distinguished by the strange and humiliating peculiarity of being born with sheep's tails." The remarkable circumstances under which Lucian Gay had become acquainted with this fact; the traditionary mysteries by which the family in question had succeeded for generations in keeping it secret; the decided measures to which the chief of the family had recourse to stop for ever the rumour when it first became prevalent; and finally, the origin and result of the legend; were details which Lucian Gay, with the most rueful countenance, loved to expend upon the attentive and expanding intelligence of a new member of the Grumpy Club. Familiar as all present were with the story whose stimulus of agonising risibility they had all in turn experienced, it was with extreme difficulty that any of them could resist the fatal explosion which was to be attended with the dreaded penalty. Lord Beaumanoir looked on the table with

desperate seriousness, an ominous pucker quivering round his lip; Mr. Melton crammed his handkerchief into his mouth with one hand, while he lighted the wrong end of a cigar with the other; one youth hung over the back of his chair pinching himself like a faquir, while another hid his countenance on the table.

"It was at the Hunt dinner," continued Lucian Gay, in an almost solemn tone, "that an idea for a moment was prevalent, that Sir Mowbray Cholmondeley Fetherstonehaugh, as the head of the family, had resolved to terminate for ever these mysterious aspersions on his race, that had circulated in the county for more than two centuries; I mean that the highly respectable family of the Cholmondeley Fetherstonehaughs had the misfortune to be graced with that appendage to which I have referred. His health being drunk, Sir Mowbray Cholmondeley Fetherstonehaugh rose. He was a little unpopular at the moment, from an ugly story about killing foxes, and the guests were not as quiet as orators generally desire, so the Honourable Baronet prayed particular attention to a matter personal to himself. Instantly there was a dead silence——" but here Coningsby, who had moved for some time very restlessly on his chair, suddenly started up, and struggling for a moment against the inward convulsion, but in vain, stamped against the floor and gave a shout.

"A song from Mr. Coningsby," said the president of the Grumpy Club, amid an universal, and now permissible roar of laughter.

Coningsby could not sing; so he was to favour them as a substitute with a speech or a sentiment. But Lucian Gay always let one off these penalties easily, and, indeed, was ever ready to fulfil them for all. Song, speech, or sentiment, he poured them all forth; nor were pastimes more active wanting. He could dance a Tarantalla like a Lazzaroni, and execute a Cracovienne with all the mincing graces of an Opera heroine.

His powers of mimicry, indeed, were great and versatile. But in nothing was he so happy as in a Parliamentary debate. And it was remarkable that, though himself a man who on ordinary occasions was quite incapable without infinite perplexity of publicly expressing his sense of the merest courtesy of society, he was not only a master of the style of every speaker of distinction in either house, but he seemed in his imitative play to appropriate their intellectual as well as their physical peculiarities, and presented you with their mind as well as their manner. There were several attempts to-night to induce Lucian to indulge his guests with a debate, but he seemed to avoid the exertion, which was great. As the night grew old, however, and every hour he grew more lively, he suddenly broke without further pressure into the promised diversion; and Coningsby listened really with admiration to

a discussion, of which the only fault was that it was more parliamentary than the original,—"plus Arabe que l'Arabie."

The Duke was never more curt, nor Sir Robert more specious; he was as fiery as Stanley, and as bitter as Graham. Nor did he do their opponents less justice. Lord Palmerston himself never treated a profound subject with a more pleasant volatility; and when Lucian rose at an early hour of morn, in a full house alike exhausted and excited, and after having endured for hours, in sarcastic silence, the menacing finger of Sir Robert, shaking over the green table and appealing to his misdeeds in the irrevocable records of Hansard, Lord John himself could not have afforded a more perfect representative of pluck.

But loud as was the laughter, and vehement the cheering, with which Lucian's performances were received, all these ebullitions sank into insignificance compared with the reception which greeted what he himself announced was to be the speech of the night. Having quaffed full many a quaigh of toddy, he insisted on delivering it on the table, a proposition with which his auditors immediately closed.

The orator appeared the great man of the night, who was to answer everybody on both sides. Ah! that harsh voice, that arrogant style, that saucy superficiality which decided on everything, that insolent ignorance that contradicted everybody; it was impossible to mistake them! And Coningsby had the pleasure of seeing reproduced before him the guardian of his youth and the patron of the mimic—the Right Honourable Nicholas Rigby!

CHAPTER XII.

MADAME COLONNA, with that vivacious energy which characterises the south, had no sooner seen Coningsby, and heard his praises celebrated by his grandfather, than she resolved that an alliance should sooner or later take place between him and her step-daughter. She imparted her projects without delay to Lucretia, who received them in a very different spirit to that in which they were communicated. Lucretia bore as little resemblance to her step-mother in character, as in person. If she did not possess her beauty, she was born with an intellect of far greater capacity and reach. She had a deep judgment. A hasty alliance with a youth, arranged by their mutual relatives, might suit very well the clime and manners of Italy, but Lucretia was well aware that it was altogether opposed to the habits and feelings of this country. She had no conviction that either Coningsby would wish to marry her, or if willing, that his grandfather would

sanction such a step in one as yet only on the threshold of the world. Lucretia therefore received the suggestions and proposals of Madame Colonna with great coldness and indifference; one might even say contempt, for she neither felt respect for this lady, nor was she sedulous to evince it. Although really younger than Coningsby, Lucretia felt that a woman of eighteen is, in all worldly considerations, ten years older than a youth of the same age. She anticipated that a considerable time might elapse before Coningsby would feel it necessary to seal his destiny by marriage, while on the other hand, she was not only anxious, but resolved, not to delay on her part her emancipation from the galling position in which she very frequently found herself.

Lucretia felt rather than expressed these ideas and impressions. She was not naturally communicative, and conversed with no one with less frankness and facility than with her step-mother. Madame Colonna therefore found no reasons in her conversation with Lucretia to change her determination. As her mind was not very ingenious, she did not see questions in those various lights which make us at the same time infirm of purpose and tolerant. What she fancied ought to be done, she fancied must be done; for she perceived no middle course or alternative. For the rest, Lucretia's carriage towards her gave her little discomfort. Besides, she herself, though good-natured, was obstinate. Her feelings were not very acute; nothing much vexed her. As long as she had fine dresses, good dinners, and opera-boxes, she could bear her plans to be crossed like a philosopher; and her consolation under her unaccomplished devices was her admirable consistency, which always assured her that her projects were wise, though unfulfilled.

She broke her purpose to Mr. Rigby, that she might gain not only his adhesion to her views, but his assistance in achieving them. As Madame Colonna, in Mr. Rigby's estimation, exercised more influence over Lord Monmouth than any other individual, faithful to his policy or practice, he agreed with all Madame Colonna's plans and wishes, and volunteered instantly to further them. As for the Prince, his wife never consulted him on any subject, nor did he wish to be consulted. On the contrary, he had no opinion about anything. All that he required was that he should be surrounded by what contributed to his personal enjoyment, that he should never be troubled, and that he should have billiards. He was not inexpert in field-sports, rode indeed very well for an Italian, but he never cared to be out-of-doors; and there was only one room in the interior which passionately interested him. It was where the echoing balls denoted the sweeping hazard or the effective cannonade. That was the

chamber where the Prince Colonna literally existed. Half-an-hour after breakfast he was in the billiard-room; he never quitted it until he dressed for dinner; and he generally contrived, while the world were amused or amusing themselves at the comedy or in the dance, to steal down with some congenial spirits to the magical and illumined chamber, and use his cue until bed-time.

Faithful to her first impressions, Lucretia had made no difference in her demeanour to Coningsby from that which she offered to the other guests. Polite, but uncommunicative; ready to answer, but never originating conversation; she charmed him as little by her manner as by her person; and after some attempts, not very painstaking, to interest her, Coningsby had ceased to address her. The day passed by with only a faint recognition between them; even that sometimes omitted.

When, however, Lucretia observed that Coningsby had become one of the most notable persons in the Castle; when she heard everywhere of his talents and accomplishments, his beauty and grace and great acquirements, and perceived that he was courted by all; that Lord Monmouth omitted no occasion publicly to evince towards him his regard and consideration; that he seemed generally looked upon in the light of his grandfather's heir; and that Lady St. Julians, more learned in that respect than any lady in the kingdom, was heard more than once to regret that she had not brought another daughter with her—Clara Isabella, as well as Augustina; the Princess Lucretia began to imagine that Madame Colonna, after all, might not be so extravagant in her purpose as she had first supposed. She, therefore, surprised Coningsby with the almost affectionate moroseness with which, while she hated to sing, she yet found pleasure in singing for him alone. And it is impossible to say what might not have been the next move in her tactics in this respect, had not the very night on which she had resolved to commence the enchantment of Coningsby introduced to her Sidonia.

The Princess Lucretia encountered the dark still glance of the friend of Lord Eskdale. He, too, beheld a woman unlike other women, and with his fine experience, both as a man and as a physiologist, felt that he was in the presence of no ordinary organisation. From the evening of his introduction Sidonia sought the society of the Princess Lucretia. He could not complain of her reserve. She threw out her mind in various and highly-cultivated intelligence. He recognised in her a deep and subtile spirit, considerable reading for a woman, habits of thought, and a soul passionate and daring. She resolved to subdue one whose appreciation she had gained, and who had subdued her. The profound

meaning and the calm manner of Sidonia combined to quell her spirit. She struggled against the spell. She tried to rival his power; to cope with him, and with the same weapons. But prompt as was her thought and bright as was its expression, her heart beat in tumult; and, with all her apparent serenity, her agitated soul was a prey of absorbing passion. She could not contend with that intelligent, yet inscrutable, eye; with that manner so full of interest and respect, and yet so tranquil. Besides, they were not on equal terms. Here was a girl contending with a man learned in the world's way.

Between Sidonia and Coningsby there at once occurred companionship. The morning after his arrival they went out shooting together. After a long ramble they would stretch themselves on the turf under a shady tree, often by the side of some brook where the cresses grow, that added a luxury to their sporting meal; and then Coningsby would lead their conversation to some subject on which Sidonia would pour out his mind with all that depth of reflection, variety of knowledge, and richness of illustrative memory, which distinguished him; and which offered so striking a contrast to the sharp talent, the shallow information, and the worldly cunning, that make a Rigby.

This fellowship between Sidonia and Coningsby elevated the latter still more in the estimation of Lucretia, and rendered her still more desirous of gaining his good will and opinion. A great friendship seemed to have arisen between them, and the world began to believe that there must be some foundation for Madame Colonna's innuendos. That lady herself was not in the least alarmed by the attention which Sidonia paid her step-daughter. It was, of course, well known that Sidonia was not a marrying man. He was, however, a great friend of Mr. Coningsby, his presence and society brought Coningsby and Lucretia more together; and however flattered her daughter might be for the moment by Sidonia's homage, still, as she would ultimately find out, if indeed she ever cared so to do, that Sidonia could only be her admirer, Madame Colonna had no kind of doubt that ultimately Coningsby would be Lucretia's husband, as she had arranged from the first.

The Princess Lucretia was a fine horse-woman, though she rarely joined the various riding-parties that were daily formed at the Castle. Often, indeed, attended only by her groom, she met the equestrians. Now she would ride with Sidonia and Coningsby, and as a female companion was indispensable, she insisted upon "La Petite" accompanying her. This was a fearful trial for Flora, but she encountered it, encouraged by the kind solicitude of Coningsby, who always seemed her friend.

Very shortly after the arrival of Sidonia, the Grand-duke and

his suite quitted the Castle, which had been his Highness' head-quarters during his visit to the manufacturing districts; but no other great change in the assembled company occurred for some little time.

CHAPTER XIII.

"You will observe one curious trait," said Sidonia to Coningsby, "in the history of this country—the depository of power is always unpopular; all combine against it; it always falls. Power was deposited in the great Barons; the Church, using the King for its instrument, crushed the great Barons. Power was deposited in the Church; the King, bribing the Parliament, plundered the Church. Power was deposited in the King; the Parliament, using the People, beheaded the King, expelled the King, changed the King, and, finally, for a King substituted an administrative officer. For one hundred and fifty years Power has been deposited in the Parliament, and for the last sixty or seventy years it has been becoming more and more unpopular. In 1830 it was endeavoured by a reconstruction to regain the popular affection; but, in truth, as the Parliament then only made itself more powerful, it has only become more odious. As we see that the Barons, the Church, the King, have in turn devoured each other, and that the Parliament, the last devourer, remains, it is impossible to resist the impression that this body also is doomed to be destroyed; and he is a sagacious statesman who may detect in what form and in what quarter the great consumer will arise."

"You take, then, a dark view of our position?"

"Troubled, not dark. I do not ascribe to political institutions that paramount influence which it is the feeling of this age to attribute to them. The Senate that confronted Brennus in the Forum, was the same body that registered in an after-age the ribald decrees of a Nero. Trial by jury, for example, is looked upon by all as the Palladium of our liberties; yet a jury at a very recent period of our own history, the reign of Charles II., was a tribunal as iniquitous as the Inquisition." And a graver expression stole over the countenance of Sidonia as he remembered what that Inquisition had operated on his own race and his own destiny. "There are families in this country," he continued, "of both the great historical parties, that in the persecution of their houses, the murder and proscription of some of their most illustrious members, found judges as unjust and relentless in an open jury of their countrymen as we did in the conclaves of Madrid and Seville."

"Where, then, would you look for hope?"

"In what is more powerful than laws and institutions, and without which the best laws and the most skilful institutions may be a dead letter, or the very means of tyranny in the national character. It is not in the increased feebleness of its institutions that I see the peril of England; it is in the decline of its character as a community."

"And yet you could scarcely describe this as an age of corruption?"

"Not of political corruption. But it is an age of social disorganisation, far more dangerous in its consequences, because far more extensive. You may have a corrupt government and a pure community; you may have a corrupt community and a pure administration. Which would you elect?"

"Neither," said Coningsby; "I wish to see a people full of faith, and a government full of duty."

"Rely upon it," said Sidonia, "that England should think more of the community and less of the government."

"But tell me, what do you understand by the term national character?"

"A character is an assemblage of qualities; the character of England should be an assemblage of great qualities."

"But we cannot deny that the English have great virtues."

"The civilisation of a thousand years must produce great virtues: but we are speaking of the decline of public virtue, not its existence."

"In what, then, do you trace that decline?"

"In the fact that the various classes of this country are arrayed against each other."

"But to what do you attribute those reciprocal hostilities?"

"Not entirely, not even principally, to those economical causes of which we hear so much. I look upon all such as secondary causes, which, in a certain degree, must always exist, which obtrude themselves in troubled times, and which at all times it is the business of wise statesmen to watch, to regulate, to ameliorate, to modify."

"I am speaking to elicit truth, not to maintain opinions," said Coningsby; "for I have none," he added, mournfully.

"I think," said Sidonia, "that there is no error so vulgar as to believe that revolutions are occasioned by economical causes. They come in, doubtless, very often to precipitate a catastrophe; very rarely do they occasion one. I know no period, for example, when physical comfort was more diffused in England than in 1640. England had a moderate population, a very improved agriculture, a rich commerce; yet she was on the eve of the greatest and most violent changes that she has as yet experienced."

"That was a religious movement."

"Admit it; the cause, then, was not physical. The imagination of England rose against the government. It proves, then, that when that faculty is astir in a nation, it will sacrifice even physical comfort to follow its impulses."

"Do you think, then, there is a wild desire for extensive political change in the country?"

"Hardly that: England is perplexed at the present moment, not inventive. That will be the next phasis in her moral state, and to that I wish to draw your thoughts. For myself, while I ascribe little influence to physical causes for the production of this perplexity, I am still less of opinion that it can be removed by any new disposition of political power. It would only aggravate the evil. That would be recurring to the old error of supposing you can necessarily find national content in political institutions. A political institution is a machine; the motive power is the national character. With that it rests whether the machine will benefit society, or destroy it. Society in this country is perplexed, almost paralysed; in time it will move, and it will devise. How are the elements of the nation to be again blended together? In what spirit is that reorganisation to take place?"

"To know that would be to know everything."

"At least let us free ourselves from the double ignorance of the Platonists. Let us not be ignorant that we are ignorant."

"I have emancipated myself from that darkness for a long time," said Coningsby. "Long has my mind been musing over these thoughts, but to me all is still obscurity."

"In this country," said Sidonia, "since the peace, there has been an attempt to advocate a reconstruction of society on a purely rational basis. The principle of Utility has been powerfully developed. I speak not with lightness of the labours of the disciples of that school. I bow to intellect in every form: and we should be grateful to any school of philosophers, even if we disagree with them; doubly grateful in this country, where for so long a period our statesmen were in so pitiable an arrear of public intelligence. There has been an attempt to reconstruct society on a basis of material motives and calculations. It has failed. It must ultimately have failed under any circumstances; its failure in an ancient and densely-peopled kingdom was inevitable. How limited is human reason, the profoundest inquirers are most conscious. We are not indebted to the Reason of man for any of the great achievements which are the landmarks of human action and human progress. It was not Reason that besieged Troy; it was not Reason that sent forth the Saracen from the Desert to conquer the world; that inspired the Crusades; that instituted the Monastic

orders; it was not Reason that produced the Jesuits; above all, it was not Reason that created the French Revolution. Man is only truly great when he acts from the passions; never irresistible but when he appeals to the Imagination. Even Mormon counts more votaries than Bentham."

"And you think, then, that as Imagination once subdued the State, Imagination may now save it?"

"Man is made to adore and to obey: but if you will not command him, if you give him nothing to worship, he will fashion his own divinities, and find a chieftain in his own passions."

"But where can we find faith in a nation of sectaries? Who can feel loyalty to a sovereign of Downing Street?"

"I speak of the eternal principles of human nature, you answer me with the passing accidents of the hour. Sects rise and sects disappear. Where are the Fifth-Monarchy men? England is governed by Downing Street; once it was governed by Alfred and Elizabeth."

CHAPTER XIV.

About this time a steeple-chase in the West of England had attracted considerable attention. This sport was then of recent introduction in England, and is, in fact, an importation of Irish growth, although it has flourished in our soil. A young guardsman, who was then a guest at the Castle, and who had been in garrison in Ireland, had some experience of this pastime in the Kildare country, and he proposed that they should have a steeple-chase at Coningsby. This was a suggestion very agreeable to the Marquess of Beaumanoir, celebrated for his feats of horsemanship, and, indeed, to most of the guests. It was agreed that the race should come off at once, before any of the present company, many of whom gave symptoms of being on the wing, had quitted the Castle. The young guardsman and Mr. Guy Flouncey had surveyed the country, and had selected a line which they esteemed very appropriate for the scene of action. From a hill of common land you looked down upon the valley of Coningsby, richly cultivated, deeply ditched, and stiffly fenced; the valley was bounded by another rising ground, and the scene was admirably calculated to give an extensive view to a multitude.

The distance along the valley was to be two miles out, and home again; the starting-post being also the winning-post, and the flags, which were placed on every fence which the horses were to pass, were to be passed on the left-hand of the rider both going and coming; so that although the horses had to leap the same fences forward and backward, they could not come over the same place twice. In

the last field before they turned, was a brook seventeen feet clear from side to side, with good taking off on both banks. Here real business commenced.

Lord Monmouth highly approved the scheme, but mentioned that the stakes must be moderate, and open to the whole county. The neighbourhood had a week of preparation, and the entries for the Coningsby steeple-chase were numerous. Lord Monmouth, after a reserve for his own account, placed his stable at the service of his guests. For himself, he offered to back his horse, Sir Robert, which was to be ridden by his grandson.

Now, nothing was spoken or thought of at Coningsby Castle except the coming sport. The ladies shared the general excitement. They embroidered handkerchiefs, and scarfs, and gloves, with the respective colours of the rivals, and tried to make jockey-caps. Lady St. Julians postponed her intended departure in consequence. Madame Colonna wished that some means could be contrived by which they might all win.

Sidonia, with the other competitors, had ridden over the ground and glanced at the brook with the eye of a workman. On his return to the Castle he sent a despatch for some of his stud.

Coningsby was all anxiety to win. He was proud of the confidence of his grandfather in backing him. He had a powerful horse and a first-rate fencer, and he was resolved himself not to flinch. On the night before the race, retiring somewhat earlier than usual to his chamber, he observed on his dressing-table a small packet addressed to his name, and in an unknown handwriting. Opening it, he found a very pretty racing-jacket embroidered with his colours of pink and white. This was a perplexing circumstance, but he fancied it on the whole a happy omen. And who was the donor? Certainly not the Princess Lucretia, for he had observed her fashioning some maroon ribbons, which were the colours of Sidonia. It could scarcely be from Mrs. Guy Flouncey. Perhaps Madame Colonna to please—the Marquess? Thinking over this incident he fell asleep.

The morning before the race Sidonia's horses arrived All went to examine them at the stables. Among them was an Arab mare. Coningsby recognised the Daughter of the Star. She was greatly admired for her points; but Guy Flouncey whispered to Mr. Melton that she never could do the work.

"But Lord Beaumanoir says he is all for speed against strength in these affairs," said Mr. Melton.

Guy Flouncey smiled incredulously.

The night before the race it rained rather heavily.

"I take it the country will not be very like the Deserts of

Arabia," said Mr. Guy Flouncey, with a knowing look to Mr. Melton, who was noting a bet in his memorandum-book.

The morning was very fine, clear, and sunny, with a soft western breeze. The starting-post was about three miles from the Castle; but, long before the hour, the surrounding hills were covered with people; squire and farmer; with no lack of their wives and daughters; many a hind in his smock-frock, and many an "operative" from the neighbouring factories. The "gentlemen riders" gradually arrived. The entries were very numerous, though it was understood that not more than a dozen would come to the post, and half of these were the guests of Lord Monmouth. At half-past one the *cortège* from the Castle arrived, and took up the post which had been prepared for them on the summit of the hill. Lord Monmouth was very much cheered on his arrival. In the carriage with him were Madame Colonna and Lady St. Julians. The Princess Lucretia, Lady Gaythorpe, Mrs. Guy Flouncey, accompanied by Lord Eskdale and other cavaliers, formed a brilliant company. There was scarcely a domestic in the Castle who was not there. The comedians, indeed, did not care to come, but Villebecque prevailed upon Flora to drive with him to the race in a buggy he borrowed of the steward.

The start was to be at two o'clock. The "gentlemen jockeys" are mustered. Never were riders mounted and appointed in better style. The stewards and the clerk of the course attend them to the starting-post. There they are now assembled. Guy Flouncey takes up his stirrup-leathers a hole; Mr. Melton looks at his girths. In a few moments, the irrevocable monosyllable will be uttered.

The bugle sounds for them to face about; the clerk of the course sings out, "Gentlemen, are you all ready?" No objection made, the word given to go, and fifteen riders start in excellent style.

Prince Colonna, who rode like Prince Rupert, took the lead, followed close by a stout yeoman on an old white horse of great provincial celebrity, who made steady running, and, from his appearance and action, an awkward customer. The rest, with two exceptions, followed in a cluster at no great distance, and in this order they continued, with very slight variation, for the first two miles, though there were several ox-fences, and one or two of them remarkably stiff. Indeed, they appeared more like horses running over a course than over a country. The two exceptions were Lord Beaumanoir on his horse Sunbeam, and Sidonia on the Arab. These kept somewhat slightly in the rear.

Almost in this wise they approached the dreaded brook. Indeed,

with the exception of the last two riders, who were about thirty yards behind, it seemed that you might have covered the rest of the field with a sheet. They arrived at the brook at the same moment: seventeen feet of water between strong sound banks is no holiday work; but they charged with unfaltering intrepidity. But what a revolution in their spirited order did that instant produce! A masked battery of canister and grape could not have achieved more terrible execution. Coningsby alone clearly lighted on the opposing bank; but, for the rest of them, it seemed for a moment that they were all in the middle of the brook, one over another, splashing, kicking, swearing: every one trying to get out and keep others in. Mr. Melton and the stout yeoman regained their saddles and were soon again in chase. The Prince lost his horse, and was not alone in his misfortune. Mr. Guy Flouncey lay on his back with a horse across his diaphragm; only his head above the water, and his mouth full of chickweed and dock-leaves. And if help had not been at hand, he and several others might have remained struggling in their watery bed for a considerable period. In the midst of this turmoil, the Marquess and Sidonia at the same moment cleared the brook.

Affairs now became very interesting. Here Coningsby took up the running, Sidonia and the Marquess lying close at his quarters. Mr. Melton had gone the wrong side of a flag, and the stout yeoman, though close at hand, was already trusting much to his spurs. In the extreme distance might be detected three or four stragglers. Thus they continued until within three fields of home. A ploughed field finished the old white horse; the yeoman struck his spurs to the rowels, but the only effect of the experiment was, that the horse stood stock-still. Coningsby, Sidonia, and the Marquess, were now all together. The winning-post is in sight, and a high and strong gate leads to the last field. Coningsby, looking like a winner, gallantly dashed forward and sent Sir Robert at the gate, but he had over-estimated his horse's powers at this point of the game, and a rattling fall was the consequence: however, horse and rider were both on the right side, and Coningsby was in his saddle and at work again in a moment. It seemed that the Marquess was winning. There was only one more fence; and that the foot people had made a breach in by the side of a gate-post, and wide enough, as was said, for a broad-wheel waggon to travel by. Instead of passing straight over this gap, Sunbeam swerved against the gate and threw his rider. This was decisive. The Daughter of the Star, who was still going beautifully, pulling double, and her jockey sitting still, sprang over the gap and went in first; Coningsby, on Sir Robert, being placed second. The dis-

tance measured was about four miles; there were thirty-nine leaps, and it was done under fifteen minutes

Lord Monmouth was well content with the prowess of his grandson, and his extreme cordiality consoled Coningsby under a defeat which was very vexatious. It was some alleviation that he was beaten by Sidonia. Madame Colonna even shed tears at her young friend's disappointment, and mourned it especially for Lucretia, who had said nothing, though a flush might be observed on her usually pale countenance. Villebecque, who had betted, was so extremely excited by the whole affair, especially during the last three minutes, that he quite forgot his quiet companion, and when he looked round he found Flora fainting.

"You rode well," said Sidonia to Coningsby; "but your horse was more strong than swift. After all, this thing is a race; and, notwithstanding Solomon, in a race speed must win."

CHAPTER XV.

NOTWITHSTANDING the fatigues of the morning, the evening was passed with great gaiety at the Castle. The gentlemen all vowed that, far from being inconvenienced by their mishaps, they felt, on the whole, rather better for them. Mr. Guy Flouncey, indeed, did not seem quite so limber and flexible as usual; and the young guardsman, who had previously discoursed in an almost alarming style of the perils and feats of the Kildare country, had subsided into a remarkable reserve. The Provincials were delighted with Sidonia's riding, and even the Leicestershire gentlemen almost admitted that he was a "customer."

Lord Monmouth beckoned to Coningsby to sit by him on the sofa, and spoke of his approaching University life. He gave his grandson a great deal of good advice: told him to avoid drinking, especially if he ever chanced to play cards, which he hoped he never would; urged the expediency of never borrowing money, and of confining his loans to small sums, and then only to friends of whom he wished to get rid; most particularly impressed on him never to permit his feelings to be engaged by any woman; nobody, he assured Coningsby, despised that weakness more than women themselves. Indeed, feeling of any kind did not suit the present age—it was not *bon ton;* and in some degree always made a man ridiculous. Coningsby was always to have before him the possible catastrophe of becoming ridiculous. It was the test of conduct, Lord Monmouth said; a fear of becoming ridiculous is the best guide in life, and will save a man from all sorts of scrapes. For

the rest, Coningsby was to appear at Cambridge as became Lord Monmouth's favourite grandson. His grandfather had opened an account for him with Drummonds', on whom he was to draw for his very considerable allowance; and if by any chance he found himself in a scrape, no matter of what kind, he was to be sure to write to his grandfather, who would certainly get him out of it.

"Your departure is sudden," said the Princess Lucretia, in a low deep tone to Sidonia, who was sitting by her side and screened from general observation by the waltzers who whirled by.

"Departures should be sudden."

"I do not like departures," said the Princess.

"Nor did the Queen of Sheba when she quitted Solomon. You know what she did?"

"Tell me."

"She wept very much, and let one of the King's birds fly into the garden. 'You are freed from your cage,' she said; 'but I am going back to mine.'"

"But you never weep?" said the Princess.

"Never."

"And are always free?"

"So are men in the Desert."

"But your life is not a Desert?"

"It at least resembles the Desert in one respect—it is useless."

"The only useless life is woman's."

"Yet there have been heroines," said Sidonia.

"The Queen of Sheba," said the Princess, smiling.

"A favourite of mine," said Sidonia.

"And why was she a favourite of yours?" rather eagerly inquired Lucretia.

"Because she thought deeply, talked finely, and moved gracefully."

"And yet might be a very unfeeling dame at the same time," said the Princess.

"I never thought of that," said Sidonia.

"The heart, apparently, does not reckon in your philosophy."

"What we call the heart," said Sidonia, "is a nervous sensation, like shyness, which gradually disappears in society. It is fervent in the nursery, strong in the domestic circle, tumultuous at school. The affections are the children of ignorance; when the horizon of our experience expands, and models multiply, love and admiration imperceptibly vanish."

"I fear the horizon of your experience has very greatly expanded. With your opinions, what charm can there be in life?"

"The sense of existence."

"So Sidonia is off to-morrow, Monmouth," said Lord Eskdale.

"Hah!" said the Marquess. "I must get him to breakfast with me before he goes."

The party broke up. Coningsby, who had heard Lord Eskdale announce Sidonia's departure, lingered to express his regret, and say farewell.

"I cannot sleep," said Sidonia; "and I never smoke in Europe. If you are not stiff with your wounds, come to my rooms."

This invitation was very willingly accepted.

"I am going to Cambridge in a week," said Coningsby. "I was almost in hopes you might have remained as long."

"I, also; but my letters of this morning demand me. If it had not been for our chase, I should have quitted immediately. The minister cannot pay the interest on the national debt—not an unprecedented circumstance, and has applied to us. I never permit any business of state to be transacted without my personal interposition; and so I must go up to town immediately."

"Suppose you don't pay it," said Coningsby, smiling.

"If I followed my own impulse, I would remain here," said Sidonia. "Can anything be more absurd than that a nation should apply to an individual to maintain its credit, and with its credit, its existence as an empire, and its comfort as a people; and that individual one to whom its laws deny the proudest rights of citizenship, the privilege of sitting in its senate and of holding land? for though I have been rash enough to buy several estates, my own opinion is, that by the existing law of England, an Englishman of Hebrew faith cannot possess the soil."

"But surely it would be easy to repeal a law so illiberal——"

"Oh! as for illiberality I have no objection to it if it be an element of power. Eschew political sentimentalism. What I contend is, that if you permit men to accumulate property, and they use that permission to a great extent, power is inseparable from that property, and it is in the last degree impolitic to make it the interest of any powerful class to oppose the institutions under which they live. The Jews, for example, independent of the capital qualities for citizenship which they possess in their industry, temperance, and energy and vivacity of mind, are a race essentially monarchical, deeply religious, and shrinking themselves from converts as from a calamity, are ever anxious to see the religious systems of the countries in which they live, flourish; yet, since your society has become agitated in England, and powerful combinations menace your institutions, you find the once loyal Hebrew invariably arrayed in the same ranks as the leveller and the latitudinarian, and prepared to support the policy which may even endanger his life and property, rather than tamely continue

under a system which seeks to degrade him. The Tories lose an important election at a critical moment; 'tis the Jews come forward to vote against them. The Church is alarmed at the scheme of a latitudinarian university, and learns with relief that funds are not forthcoming for its establishment; a Jew immediately advances and endows it. Yet the Jews, Coningsby, are essentially Tories. Toryism, indeed, is but copied from the mighty prototype which has fashioned Europe. And every generation they must become more powerful and more dangerous to the society which is hostile to them. Do you think that the quiet humdrum persecution of a decorous representative of an English university can crush those who have successively baffled the Pharaohs, Nebuchadnezzar, Rome, and the Feudal ages? The fact is, you cannot destroy a pure race of the Caucasian organisation. It is a physiological fact; a simple law of nature, which has baffled Egyptian and Assyrian Kings, Roman Emperors, and Christian Inquisitors. No penal laws, no physical tortures, can effect that a superior race should be absorbed in an inferior, or be destroyed by it. The mixed persecuting races disappear; the pure persecuted race remains. And at this moment, in spite of centuries, of tens of centuries, of degradation, the Jewish mind exercises a vast influence on the affairs of Europe. I speak not of their laws, which you still obey; of their literature, with which your minds are saturated; but of the living Hebrew intellect.

"You never observe a great intellectual movement in Europe in which the Jews do not greatly participate. The first Jesuits were Jews: that mysterious Russian Diplomacy which so alarms Western Europe is organised and principally carried on by Jews; that mighty revolution which is at this moment preparing in Germany, and which will be, in fact, a second and greater Reformation, and of which so little is as yet known in England, is entirely developing under the auspices of Jews, who almost monopolise the professorial chairs of Germany. Neander, the founder of Spiritual Christianity, and who is Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Berlin, is a Jew. Benary, equally famous, and in the same University, is a Jew. Wehl, the Arabic Professor of Heidelberg, is a Jew. Years ago, when I was in Palestine, I met a German student who was accumulating materials for the History of Christianity, and studying the genius of the place; a modest and learned man. It was Wehl; then unknown, since become the first Arabic scholar of the day, and the author of the life of Mahomet. But for the German professors of this race, their name is Legion. I think there are more than ten at Berlin alone.

"I told you just now that I was going up to town to-morrow, because I always made it a rule to interpose when affairs of State

were on the carpet. Otherwise, I never interfere. I hear of peace and war in newspapers, but I am never alarmed, except when I am informed that the Sovereigns want treasure; then I know that monarchs are serious.

"A few years back we were applied to by Russia. Now, there has been no friendship between the Court of St. Petersburgh and my family. It has Dutch connections, which have generally supplied it; and our representations in favour of the Polish Hebrews, a numerous race, but the most suffering and degraded of all the tribes, have not been very agreeable to the Czar. However, circumstances drew to an approximation between the Romanoffs and the Sidonias. I resolved to go myself to St. Petersburgh. I had, on my arrival, an interview with the Russian Minister of Finance, Count Cancrin; I beheld the son of a Lithuanian Jew. The loan was connected with the affairs of Spain; I resolved on repairing to Spain from Russia. I travelled without intermission. I had an audience immediately on my arrival with the Spanish Minister, Señor Mendizabel; I beheld one like myself, the son of a Nuevo Christiano, a Jew of Arragon. In consequence of what transpired at Madrid, I went straight to Paris to consult the President of the French Council; I beheld the son of a French Jew, a hero, an imperial marshal, and very properly so, for who should be military heroes if not those who worship the Lord of Hosts?"

"And is Soult a Hebrew?"

"Yes, and others of the French marshals, and the most famous; Massena, for example; his real name was Manasseh: but to my anecdote. The consequence of our consultations was, that some Northern power should be applied to in a friendly and mediative capacity. We fixed on Prussia; and the President of the Council made an application to the Prussian Minister, who attended a few days after our conference. Count Arnim entered the cabinet, and I beheld a Prussian Jew. So you see, my dear Coningsby, that the world is governed by very different personages to what is imagined by those who are not behind the scenes."

"You startle, and deeply interest me."

"You must study physiology, my dear child. Pure races of Caucasus may be persecuted, but they cannot be despised, except by the brutal ignorance of some mongrel breed, that brandishes fagots and howls extermination, but is itself exterminated, without persecution, by that irresistible law of Nature which is fatal to ours."

"But I come also from Caucasus," said Coningsby.

"Verily; and thank your Creator for such a destiny: and your race is sufficiently pure. You come from the shores of the Northern Sea, land of the blue eye, and the golden hair, and the frank

brow: 'tis a famous breed, with whom we Arabs have contended long; from whom we have suffered much · but these Goths, and Saxons, and Normans, were doubtless great men."

"But so favoured by Nature, why has not your race produced great poets, great orators, great writers?"

"Favoured by Nature and by Nature's God, we produced the lyre of David; we gave you Isaiah and Ezekiel; they are our Olynthiacs, our Philippics. Favoured by Nature we still remain: but in exact proportion as we have been favoured by Nature we have been persecuted by Man. After a thousand struggles; after acts of heroic courage that Rome has never equalled; deeds of divine patriotism that Athens, and Sparta, and Carthage have never excelled; we have endured fifteen hundred years of supernatural slavery, during which, every device that can degrade or destroy man has been the destiny that we have sustained and baffled. The Hebrew child has entered adolescence only to learn that he was the Pariah of that ungrateful Europe that owes to him the best part of its laws, a fine portion of its literature, all its religion. Great poets require a public; we have been content with the immortal melodies that we sung more than two thousand years ago by the waters of Babylon and wept. They record our triumphs; they solace our affliction. Great orators are the creatures of popular assemblies; we were permitted only by stealth to meet even in our temples. And as for great writers, the catalogue is not blank. What are all the schoolmen, Aquinas himself, to Maimonides? and as for modern philosophy, all springs from Spinoza.

"But the passionate and creative genius, that is the nearest link to Divinity, and which no human tyranny can destroy, though it can divert it; that should have stirred the hearts of nations by its inspired sympathy, or governed senates by its burning eloquence; has found a medium for its expression, to which, in spite of your prejudices and your evil passions, you have been obliged to bow. The ear, the voice, the fancy teeming with combinations, the imagination fervent with picture and emotion, that came from Caucasus, and which we have preserved unpolluted, have endowed us with almost the exclusive privilege of MUSIC; that science of harmonious sounds, which the ancients recognised as most divine, and deified in the person of their most beautiful creation. I speak not of the past; though, were I to enter into the history of the lords of melody, you would find it the annals of Hebrew genius. But at this moment even, musical Europe is ours. There is not a company of singers, not an orchestra in a single capital, that is not crowded with our children under the feigned names which they adopt to conciliate the dark aversion which your posterity will some

day disclaim with shame and disgust. Almost every great composer, skilled musician, almost every voice that ravishes you with its transporting strains, springs from our tribes. The catalogue is too vast to enumerate; too illustrious to dwell for a moment on secondary names, however eminent. Enough for us that the three great creative minds to whose exquisite inventions all nations at this moment yield—Rossini, Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn, are of Hebrew race; and little do your men of fashion, your 'muscadins' of Paris, and your dandies of London, as they thrill into raptures at the notes of a Pasta or a Grisi—little do they suspect that they are offering their homage to 'the sweet singers of Israel!'"

CHAPTER XVI.

It was the noon of the day on which Sidonia was to leave the Castle. The wind was high; the vast white clouds scudded over the blue heaven; the leaves yet green, and tender branches snapped like glass, were whirled in eddies from the trees; the grassy sward undulated like the ocean with a thousand tints and shadows. From the window of the music-room Lucretia Colonna gazed on the turbulent sky.

The heaven of her heart, too, was disturbed.

She turned from the agitated external world to ponder over her inward emotion. She uttered a deep sigh.

Slowly she moved towards her harp; wildly, almost unconsciously, she touched with one hand its strings, while her eyes were fixed on the ground. An imperfect melody resounded; yet plaintive and passionate. It seemed to attract her soul. She raised her head, and then, touching the strings with both her hands, she poured forth tones of deep, yet thrilling power.

"I am a stranger in the halls of a stranger! Ah! whither shall I flee?

"To the castle of my fathers in the green mountains; to the palace of my fathers in the ancient city?

"There is no flag on the castle of my fathers in the green mountains: silent is the palace of my fathers in the ancient city.

"Is there no home for the homeless? Can the unloved never find love?

"Ah! thou fliest away, fleet cloud:—he will leave us swifter than thee! Alas! cutting wind, thy breath is not as cold as his heart!

"I am a stranger in the halls of a stranger! Ah! whither shall I flee?"

The door of the music-room slowly opened. It was Sidonia. His hat was in his hand; he was evidently on the point of departure.

"Those sounds assured me," he said very calmly, but kindly, as he advanced, "that I might find you here, on which I scarcely counted, at so early an hour."

"You are going then?" said the Princess.

"My carriage is at the door; the Marquess has delayed me; I must be in London to-night. I conclude more abruptly than I could have wished one of the most agreeable visits I ever made; and I hope you will permit me to express to you how much I am indebted to you for a society which those should deem themselves fortunate who can more frequently enjoy."

He held forth his hand; she extended hers, cold as marble, which he bent over, but did not press to his lips.

"Lord Monmouth talks of remaining here some time," he observed; "but I suppose next year, if not this, we shall all meet in some city of the earth?"

Lucretia bowed; and Sidonia, with a graceful reverence, withdrew.

The Princess Lucretia stood for some moments motionless; a sound attracted her to the window; she perceived the equipage of Sidonia whirling along the winding roads of the park. She watched it till it disappeared; then quitting the window, she threw herself into a chair, and buried her face in her shawl.

END OF BOOK IV.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

An University life did not bring to Coningsby that feeling of emancipation usually experienced by freshmen. The contrast between school and college life is, perhaps, under any circumstances, less striking to the Etonian than to others: he has been prepared for becoming his own master by the liberty so wisely entrusted to him in his boyhood, and which is, in general, so discreetly exercised. But there were also other reasons why Coningsby should have been less impressed with the novelty of his life, and have encountered less temptations than commonly are met with in the new existence which an University opens to youth. In the interval which had elapsed between quitting Eton and going to Cambridge, brief as the period may comparatively appear, Coningsby had seen much of the world. Three or four months, indeed, may not seem, at the first blush, a course of time which can very materially influence the formation of character; but time must not be counted by calendars, but by sensations, by thought. Coningsby had felt a good deal, reflected more. He had encountered a great number of human beings, offering a vast variety of character for his observation. It was not merely manners, but even the intellectual and moral development of the human mind, which in a great degree, unconsciously to himself, had been submitted to his study and his scrutiny. New trains of ideas had been opened to him; his mind was teeming with suggestions. The horizon of his intelligence had insensibly expanded. He perceived that there were other opinions in the world, besides those to which he had been habituated. The depths of his intellect had been stirred. He was a wiser man.

He distinguished three individuals whose acquaintance had greatly influenced his mind; Eustace Lyle, the elder Millbank, above all, Sidonia He curiously meditated over the fact, that three English subjects, one of them a principal landed proprietor, another one of the most eminent manufacturers, and the third the greatest capitalist in the kingdom, all of them men of great intelligence, and doubtless of a high probity and conscience, were in their hearts disaffected with the political constitution of the country. Yet, unquestionably, these were the men among whom we ought to seek for some of our first citizens. What, then, was

this repulsive quality in those institutions which we persisted in calling national, and which once were so? Here was a great question.

There was another reason, also, why Coningsby should feel a little fastidious among his new habits, and, without being aware of it, a little depressed. For three or four months, and for the first time in his life, he had passed his time in the continual society of refined and charming women. It is an acquaintance which, when habitual, exercises a great influence over the tone of the mind, even if it does not produce any more violent effects. It refines the taste, quickens the perception, and gives, as it were, a grace and flexibility to the intellect. Coningsby in his solitary rooms arranging his books, sighed, when he recalled the Lady Everinghams and the Lady Theresas; the gracious Duchess; the frank, good-natured Madame Colonna; that deeply interesting enigma, the Princess Lucretia; and the gentle Flora. He thought with disgust of the impending dissipation of an University, which could only be an exaggeration of their coarse frolics at school. It seemed rather vapid this mighty Cambridge, over which they had so often talked in the playing fields of Eton, with such anticipations of its vast and absorbing interest. And those University honours that once were the great object of his aspirations, they did not figure in that grandeur with which they once haunted his imagination.

What Coningsby determined to conquer was knowledge. He had watched the influence of Sidonia in society with an eye of unceasing vigilance. Coningsby perceived that all yielded to him; that Lord Monmouth even, who seemed to respect none, gave place to his intelligence; appealed to him, listened to him, was guided by him. What was the secret of this influence? Knowledge. On all subjects, his views were prompt and clear, and this not more from his native sagacity and reach of view, than from the aggregate of facts which rose to guide his judgment and illustrate his meaning, from all countries and all ages, instantly at his command.

The friends of Coningsby were now hourly arriving. It seemed when he met them again, that they had all suddenly become men since they had separated; Buckhurst especially. He had been at Paris, and returned with his mind very much opened, and trousers made quite in a new style. All his thoughts were, how soon he could contrive to get back again; and he told them endless stories of actresses, and dinners at fashionable *cafés*. Vere enjoyed Cambridge most, because he had been staying with his family since he quitted Eton. Henry Sydney was full of church architecture, national sports, restoration of the order of the Peasantry, and

was to maintain a constant correspondence on these and similar subjects with Eustace Lyle. Finally, however, they all fell into a very fair, regular, routine life. They all read a little, but not with the enthusiasm which they had once projected. Buckhurst drove four-in-hand, and they all of them sometimes assisted him; but not immoderately. Their suppers were sometimes gay, but never outrageous; and, among all of them, the school-friendship was maintained unbroken, and even undisturbed.

The fame of Coningsby preceded him at Cambridge. No man ever went up from whom more was expected in every way. The dons awaited a sucking member for the University, the undergraduates were prepared to welcome a new Alcibiades. He was neither: neither a prig nor a profligate; but a quiet, gentlemanlike, yet spirited young man, gracious to all, but intimate only with his old friends, and giving always an impression in his general tone that his soul was not absorbed in his University.

And yet, perhaps, he might have been coddled into a prig, or flattered into a profligate, had it not been for the intervening experience which he had gained between his school and college life. That had visibly impressed upon him, what before he had only faintly acquired from books, that there was a greater and more real world awaiting him, than to be found in those bowers of Academus to which youth is apt at first to attribute an exaggerated importance. A world of action and passion, of power and peril; a world for which a great preparation was indeed necessary, severe and profound, but not altogether such an one as was now offered to him. Yet this want must be supplied, and by himself. Coningsby had already acquirements sufficiently considerable, with some formal application, to ensure him at all times his degree. He was no longer engrossed by the intention he once proudly entertained of trying for honours, and he chalked out for himself that range of reading, which, digested by his thought, should furnish him in some degree with that various knowledge of the history of man to which he aspired. No, we must not for a moment believe that accident could have long diverted the course of a character so strong. The same desire that prevented the Castle of his grandfather from proving a Castle of Indolence to him, that saved him from a too early initiation into the seductive distractions of a refined and luxurious society, would have preserved Coningsby from the puerile profligacy of a college life, or from being that idol of private tutors, a young pedant. It was that noble ambition, the highest and the best, that must be born in the heart and organised in the brain, which will not let a man be content, unless his intellectual power is recognised by his race, and desires that it should contribute to their welfare. It is the heroic

feeling; the feeling that in old days produced demi-gods; without which no State is safe; without which political institutions are meat without salt; the Crown a bauble, the Church an establishment, Parliaments debating-clubs, and Civilisation itself but a fitful and transient dream

CHAPTER II.

Less than a year after the arrival of Coningsby at Cambridge, and which he had only once quitted in the interval, in order to pass a short time in Berkshire with his friend Buckhurst, occurred the death of King William IV. This event necessarily induced a dissolution of the Parliament, elected under the auspices of Sir Robert Peel in 1834, and after the publication of the Tamworth Manifesto.

The death of the King was a great blow to what had now come to be generally styled the "Conservative Cause." It was quite unexpected; within a fortnight of his death, eminent persons still believed that "it was only the hay-fever." Had his Majesty lived until after the then impending Registration, the Whigs would have been again dismissed. Nor is there any doubt that, under these circumstances, the "Conservative Cause" would have secured for the new ministers a parliamentary majority. What would have been the consequences to the country, if the four years of Whig rule, from 1837 to 1841, had not occurred? It is easier to decide what would have been the consequences to the Whigs. Some of their great friends might have lacked blue ribbons and Lord-lieutenancies; and some of their little friends comfortable places in the Customs and Excise. They would have lost, undoubtedly, the distribution of four years' patronage; we can hardly say the exercise of four years' power; but they would have existed at this moment as the most powerful and popular Opposition that ever flourished in this country, if, indeed, the course of events had not long ere this carried them back to their old posts in a proud and intelligible position. The Reform Bill did not do more injury to the Tories, than the attempt to govern this country without a decided parliamentary majority did the Whigs. The greatest of all evils is a weak government. They cannot carry good measures, they are forced to carry bad ones.

The death of the King was a great blow to the "Conservative Cause;" that is to say, it darkened the brow of Tadpole, quailed the heart of Taper, crushed all the rising hopes of those numerous statesmen who believe the country must be saved if they receive twelve hundred a-year. It is a peculiar class, that; 1,200*l.* per

annum, paid quarterly, is their idea of political science and human nature. To receive 1,200*l.* per annum is government; to try to receive 1,200*l.* per annum is opposition; to wish to receive 1,200*l.* per annum is ambition. If a man wants to get into Parliament, and does not want to get 1,200*l.* per annum, they look upon him as daft; as a benighted being. They stare in each other's face, and ask, "What can * * * * * want to get into Parliament for?" They have no conception that public reputation is a motive power, and with many men the greatest. They have as much idea of fame or celebrity, even of the masculine impulse of an honourable pride, as eunuchs of manly joys.

The twelve-hundred-a-yearers were in despair about the King's death. Their loyal souls were sorely grieved that his gracious Majesty had not outlived the Registration. All their happy inventions about "hay-fever," circulated in confidence, and sent by post to chairmen of Conservative Associations, followed by a royal funeral! General election about to take place with the old registration; government boroughs against them, and the young Queen for a cry. What a cry! Youth, beauty, and a Queen! Taper grew pale at the thought. What could they possibly get up to countervail it? Even Church and Corn-laws together would not do; and then Church was sulky, for "the Conservative Cause" had just made it a present of a Commission, and all that the country gentlemen knew of Conservatism was, that it would not repeal the Malt Tax, and had made them repeal their pledges. Yet a cry must be found. A dissolution without a cry, in the Taper philosophy, would be a world without a sun. A rise might be got by "Independence of the House of Lords;" and Lord Lyndhurst's summaries might be well circulated at one penny per hundred, large discount allowed to Conservative Associations, and endless credit. Tadpole, however, was never very fond of the House of Lords; besides, it was too limited. Tadpole wanted the young Queen brought in; the rogue! At length, one morning, Taper came up to him with a slip of paper, and a smile of complacent austerity on his dull visage, "I think, Mr. Tadpole, that will do!"

Tadpole took the paper and read, "OUR YOUNG QUEEN, AND OUR OLD INSTITUTIONS!"

The eyes of Tadpole sparkled as if they had met a gnomic sentence of Periander or Thales; then turning to Taper, he said,—

"What do you think of 'ancient,' instead of 'old'?"

"You cannot have 'Our modern Queen, and our ancient Institutions,'" said Mr. Taper.

The dissolution was soon followed by an election for the borough of Cambridge. The "Conservative-Cause" candidate

was an old Etonian. That was a bond of sympathy which imparted zeal even to those who were a little sceptical of the essential virtues of Conservatism. Every under-graduate especially who remembered "the distant spires," became enthusiastic. Buckhurst took a very decided part. He cheered, he canvassed, he brought men to the poll whom none could move; he influenced his friends and his companions. Even Coningsby caught the contagion, and Vere, who had imbibed much of Coningsby's political sentiment, prevailed on himself to be neutral. The Conservative Cause triumphed in the person of its Eton champion. The day the member was chaired, several men in Coningsby's rooms were talking over their triumph.

"By Jove!" said the panting Buckhurst, throwing himself on the sofa, "it was well done; never was any thing better done. An immense triumph! The greatest triumph the Conservative Cause has had. And yet," he added, laughing, "if any fellow were to ask me what the Conservative Cause is, I am sure I should not know what to say."

"Why, it's the cause of our glorious institutions," said Coningsby. "A Crown robbed of its prerogatives; a Church controlled by a commission; and an Aristocracy that does not lead."

"Under whose genial influence, the order of the Peasantry, 'a country's pride,' has vanished from the face of the land," said Henry Sydney, "and is succeeded by a race of serfs, who are called labourers, and who burn ricks."

"Under which," continued Coningsby, "the Crown has become a cipher; the Church a sect; the Nobility drones; and the People drudges."

"It is the great constitutional cause," said Lord Vere, "that refuses everything to opposition; yields everything to agitation; conservative in Parliament, destructive out-of-doors; that has no objection to any change provided only it be effected by unauthorised means."

"The first public association of men," said Coningsby, "who have worked for an avowed end without enunciating a single principle."

"And who have established political infidelity throughout the land," said Lord Henry.

"By Jove!" said Buckhurst, "what infernal fools we have made ourselves this last week!"

"Nay," said Coningsby, smiling, "it was our last schoolboy weakness. Floreat Etona, under all circumstances."

"I certainly, Coningsby," said Lord Vere, "shall not assume the Conservative Cause, instead of the cause for which Hampden died in the field, and Sydney on the scaffold."

"The cause for which Hampden died in the field and Sydney on the scaffold," said Coningsby, "was the cause of the Venetian Republic."

"How—how?" said Buckhurst.

"I repeat it," said Coningsby. "The great object of the Whig leaders in England from the first movement under Hampden to the last most successful one in 1688, was to establish in England a high aristocratic republic on the model of the Venetian, then the study and admiration of all speculative politicians. Read Harrington; turn over Algernon Sydney; and you will see how the minds of the English leaders in the seventeenth century were saturated with the Venetian type. And they at length succeeded. William III. found them out in an instant. He told the Whig leaders, 'I will not be a Doge.' He balanced parties; he baffled them as the Puritans baffled them fifty years before. The reign of Anne was a struggle between the Venetian and the English systems. Two great Whig nobles, Argyle and Somerset, worthy of seats in the Council of Ten, forced their Sovereign on her death-bed to change the ministry. They accomplished their object. They brought in a new family on their own terms. George I. was a Doge; George II. was a Doge; they were what William III., a great man, would not be. George III. tried not to be a Doge, but it was impossible materially to resist the deeply-laid combination. He might get rid of the Whig magnificoes, but he could not rid himself of the Venetian constitution. And a Venetian constitution did govern England from the accession of the House of Hanover until 1832. Now I do not ask you, Vere, to relinquish the political tenets which in ordinary times would have been your inheritance. All I say is, the constitution introduced by your ancestors having been subverted by their descendants your contemporaries, beware of still holding Venetian principles of government when you have not a Venetian constitution to govern with. Do what I am doing, what Henry Sydney and Buckhurst are doing, what other men that I could mention are doing, hold yourself aloof from political parties which, from the necessity of things, have ceased to have distinctive principles, and are therefore practically only factions; and wait and see, whether with patience, energy, honour, and Christian faith, and a desire to look to the national welfare and not to sectional and limited interests; whether, I say, we may not discover some great principles to guide us, to which we may adhere, and which then, if true, will ultimately guide and control others."

"The Whigs are worn out," said Vere, "Conservatism is a sham, and Radicalism is pollution."

"I certainly," said Buckhurst, "when I get into the House of

Commons, shall speak my mind without reference to any party whatever; and all I hope is, we may all come in at the same time, and then we may make a party of our own."

"I have always heard my father say," said Vere, "that there was nothing so difficult as to organise an independent party in the House of Commons."

"Ay! but that was in the Venetian period, Vere," said Henry Sydney, smiling..

"I dare say," said Buckhurst, "the only way to make a party in the House of Commons is just the one that succeeds anywhere else. Men must associate together. When you are living in the same set, dining together every day, and quizzing the Dons, it is astonishing how well men agree. As for me, I never would enter into a conspiracy, unless the conspirators were fellows who had been at Eton with me; and then there would be no treachery."

"Let us think of principles, and not of parties," said Coningsby.

"For my part," said Buckhurst, "whenever a political system is breaking up, as in this country at present, I think the very best thing is to brush all the old Dons off the stage. They never take to the new road kindly. They are always hampered by their exploded prejudices and obsolete traditions. I don't think a single man, Vere, that sat in the Venetian Senate ought to be allowed to sit in the present English House of Commons."

"Well, no one does in our family except my uncle Philip," said Lord Henry; "and the moment I want it, he will resign; for he detests Parliament. It interferes so with his hunting."

"Well, we all have fair parliamentary prospects," said Buckhurst. "That is something. I wish we were in now."

"Heaven forbid!" said Coningsby. "I tremble at the responsibility of a seat at any time. With my present unsettled and perplexed views, there is nothing from which I should recoil so much as the House of Commons."

"I quite agree with you," said Henry Sydney. "The best thing we can do is to keep as clear of political party as we possibly can. How many men waste the best part of their lives in painfully apologising for conscientious deviation from a parliamentary course which they adopted when they were boys, without thought, or prompted by some local connection, or interest to secure a seat."

It was the midnight following the morning when this conversation took place, that Coningsby, alone, and having just quitted a rather boisterous party of wassailers who had been celebrating at Buckhurst's rooms the triumph of "Eton Statesmen," if not of Conservative principles, stopped in the precincts of that Royal College, that reminded him of his school-days, to cool his brow in the summer air, that even at that hour was soft, and to calm

his mind in the contemplation of the still, the sacred, and the beauteous scene that surrounded him.

There rose that fane, the pride and boast of Cambridge, not unworthy to rank among the chief temples of Christendom. Its vast form was exaggerated in the uncertain hour; part shrouded in the deepest darkness, while a flood of silver light suffused its southern side, distinguished with revealing beam the huge ribs of its buttresses, and bathed with mild lustre its airy pinnacles.

"Where is the spirit that raised these walls?" thought Coningsby. "Is it indeed extinct? Is then this civilisation, so much vaunted, inseparable from moderate feelings and little thoughts? If so, give me back barbarism! But I cannot believe it. Man that is made in the image of the Creator, is made for God-like deeds. Come what come may, I will cling to the heroic principle. It can alone satisfy my soul."

CHAPTER III.

We must now revert to the family, or rather the household, of Lord Monmouth, in which considerable changes and events had occurred since the visit of Coningsby to the Castle in the preceding autumn.

In the first place, the earliest frost of the winter had carried off the aged proprietor of Hellingsley, that contiguous estate which Lord Monmouth so much coveted, the possession of which was indeed one of the few objects of his life, and to secure which he was prepared to pay far beyond its intrinsic value, great as that undoubtedly was. Yet Lord Monmouth did not become its possessor. Long as his mind had been intent upon the subject, skilful as had been his combinations to secure his prey, and unlimited the means which were to achieve his purpose, another stepped in, and without his privity, without even the consolation of a struggle, stole away the prize; and this too a man whom he hated, almost the only individual out of his own family that he did hate; a man who had crossed him before in similar enterprises; who was his avowed foe; had lavished treasure to oppose him in elections; raised associations against his interest; established journals to assail him; denounced him in public; agitated against him in private; had declared more than once that he would make "the county too hot for him;" his personal inveterate, indomitable foe, Mr. Millbank of Millbank.

The loss of Hellingsley was a bitter disappointment to Lord Monmouth; but the loss of it to such an adversary touched him to

the quick. He did not seek to control his anger; he could not succeed even in concealing his agitation. He threw upon Rigby that glance so rare with him, but under which men always quailed; that play of the eye which Lord Monmouth shared in common with Henry VIII., that struck awe into the trembling Commons when they had given an obnoxious vote, as the King entered the gallery of his palace, and looked around him.

It was a look which implied that dreadful question, "Why have I bought you that such things should happen? Why have I unlimited means and unscrupulous agents?" It made even Rigby feel; even his brazen tones were hushed.

To fly from everything disagreeable was the practical philosophy of Lord Monmouth; but he was as brave as he was sensual. He would not shrink before the new proprietor of Hellingsley. He therefore remained at the Castle with an aching heart, and redoubled his hospitalities. An ordinary mind might have been soothed by the unceasing consideration and the skilful and delicate flattery that ever surrounded Lord Monmouth; but his sagacious intelligence was never for a moment the dupe of his vanity He had no self-love, and as he valued no one, there were really no feelings to play upon. He saw through everybody and everything; and when he had detected their purpose, discovered their weakness or their vileness, he calculated whether they could contribute to his pleasure or his convenience in a degree that counterbalanced the objections which might be urged against their intentions, or their less pleasing and profitable qualities. To be pleased was always a principal object with Lord Monmouth; but when a man wants vengeance, gay amusement is not exactly a satisfactory substitute.

A month elapsed, Lord Monmouth with a serene or smiling visage to his guests, but in private taciturn and morose. He scarcely ever gave a word to Mr. Rigby, but continually bestowed on him glances which painfully affected the appetite of that gentleman. In a hundred ways it was intimated to Mr. Rigby that he was not a welcome guest, and yet something was continually given him to do which rendered it impossible for him to take his departure. In this state of affairs, another event occurred which changed the current of feeling, and by its possible consequences distracted the Marquess from his brooding meditations over his discomfiture in the matter of Hellingsley. The Prince Colonna, who, since the steeple-chase, had imbibed a morbid predilection for such amusements, and indeed for every species of rough-riding, was thrown from his horse and killed on the spot.

This calamity broke up the party at Coningsby, which was not at the moment very numerous. Mr. Rigby, by command, instantly

seized the opportunity of preventing the arrival of other guests who were expected. This catastrophe was the cause of Mr. Rigby resuming in a great measure his old position in the Castle. There were a great many things to be done, and all disagreeable; he achieved them all, and studied everybody's convenience. Coroners' inquests, funerals especially, weeping women, these were all spectacles which Lord Monmouth could not endure, but he was so high-bred, that he would not for the world that there should be in manner or degree the slightest deficiency in propriety or even sympathy. But he wanted somebody to do everything that was proper; to be considerate and consoling and sympathetic. Mr. Rigby did it all; gave evidence at the inquest, was chief mourner at the funeral, and arranged everything so well that not a single emblem of death crossed the sight of Lord Monmouth; while Madame Colonna found submission in his exhortations, and the Princess Lucretia, a little more pale and pensive than usual, listened with tranquillity to his discourse on the vanity of all sublunary things.

When the tumult had subsided, and habits and feelings had fallen into their old routine and relapsed into their ancient channels, the Marquess proposed that they should all return to London, and with great formality, though with great warmth, begged that Madame Colonna would ever consider his roof as her own. All were glad to quit the Castle, which now presented a scene so different to its former animation, and Madame Colonna, weeping, accepted the hospitality of her friend, until the impending expansion of the spring would permit her to return to Italy. This notice of her return to her own country seemed to occasion the Marquess great disquietude.

After they had remained about a month in London, Madame Colonna sent for Mr. Rigby one morning to tell him how very painful it was to her feelings to remain under the roof of Monmouth House without the sanction of a husband; that the circumstance of being a foreigner, under such unusual affliction, might have excused, though not authorised, the step at first, and for a moment; but that the continuance of such a course was quite out of the question; that she owed it to herself, to her step-child, no longer to trespass on this friendly hospitality, which, if persisted in, might be liable to misconstruction. Mr. Rigby listened with great attention to this statement, and never in the least interrupted Madame Colonna; and then offered to do that which he was convinced the lady desired, namely, to make the Marquess acquainted with the painful state of her feelings. This he did according to his fashion, and with sufficient dexterity. Mr. Rigby himself was extremely anxious to know which way the wind blew,

and the mission with which he had been entrusted, fell in precisely with his inclinations and necessities. The Marquess listened to the communication and sighed, then turned gently round and surveyed himself in the mirror and sighed again, then said to Rigby—

"You understand exactly what I mean, Rigby. It is quite ridiculous their going, and infinitely distressing to me. They must stay."

Rigby repaired to the Princess full of mysterious bustle, and with a face beaming with importance and satisfaction. He made much of the two sighs; fully justified the confidence of the Marquess in his comprehension of unexplained intentions; prevailed on Madame Colonna to have some regard for the feelings of one so devoted; expatiated on the insignificance of worldly misconstructions, when replied to by such honourable intentions; and fully succeeded in his mission. They did stay. Month after month rolled on, and still they stayed; every month all the family becoming more resigned or more content, and more cheerful. As for the Marquess himself, Mr. Rigby never remembered him more serene and even joyous. His Lordship scarcely ever entered general society. The Colonna family remained in strict seclusion; and he preferred the company of these accomplished and congenial friends to the mob of the great world.

Between Madame Colonna and Mr. Rigby there had always subsisted considerable confidence. Now, that gentleman seemed to have achieved fresh and greater claims to her regard. In the pleasure with which he looked forward to her approaching alliance with his patron, he reminded her of the readiness with which he had embraced her suggestions for the marriage of her daughter with Coningsby. Always obliging, she was never wearied of chanting his praises to her noble admirer, who was apparently much gratified she should have bestowed her esteem on one of whom she would necessarily in after-life see so much. It is seldom the lot of husbands that their confidential friends gain the regards of their brides.

"I am delighted you all like Rigby," said Lord Monmouth, "as you will see so much of him."

The remembrance of the Hellingsley failure seemed to be quite erased from the memory of the Marquess. Rigby never recollected him more cordial and confidential, and more equable in his manner. He told Rigby one day, that he wished that Monmouth House should possess the most sumptuous and the most fanciful boudoir in London or Paris. What a hint for Rigby! That gentleman consulted the first artists, and gave them some hints in return; his researches on domestic decoration ranged through all

ages; he even meditated a rapid tour to mature his inventions; but his confidence in his native taste and genius ultimately convinced him that this movement was unnecessary.

The summer advanced; the death of the King occurred; the dissolution summoned Rigby to Coningsby and the borough of Darlford. His success was marked certain in the secret books of Tadpole and Taper. A manufacturing town, enfranchised under the Reform Act, already gained by the Conservative cause! Here was reaction—here influence of property! Influence of character, too; for no one was so popular as Lord Monmouth; a most distinguished nobleman of strict Conservative principles, who, if he carried the county and the manufacturing borough also, merited the strawberry-leaf.

"There will be no holding Rigby," said Taper; "I'm afraid he will be looking for something very high."

"The higher the better," rejoined Tadpole, "and then he will not interfere with us. I like your high-fliers; it is your plodders I detest, wearing old hats and high-lows, speaking in committee, and thinking they are men of business: d—n them!"

Rigby went down, and made some very impressive speeches; at least they read very well in some of his second-rate journals, where all the uproar figured as loud cheering, and the interruption of a cabbage-stalk was represented as a question from some intelligent individual in the crowd. The fact is, Rigby bored his audience too much with history, especially with the French Revolution, which he fancied was his "forte," so that the people at last, whenever he made any allusion to the subject, were almost as much terrified as if they had seen the guillotine.

Rigby had as yet one great advantage; he had no opponent; and without personal opposition, no contest can be very bitter. It was for some days Rigby *versus* Liberal principles: and Rigby had much the best of it; for he abused Liberal principles roundly in his harangues, who, not being represented on the occasion, made no reply; while plenty of ale, and some capital songs by Lucian Gay, who went down express, gave the right cue to the mob, who declared in chorus, beneath the windows of Rigby's hotel, that he was "a fine old English gentleman!"

But there was to be a contest; no question about that, and a sharp one, although Rigby was to win, and well. The liberal party had been so fastidious about their new candidate, that they had none ready though several biting. Jawster Sharp thought at one time that sheer necessity would give him another chance still; but even Rigby was preferable to Jawster Sharp, who, finding it would not do, published his long-prepared valedictory address, in

which he told his constituents, that having long sacrificed his health to their interests, he was now obliged to retire into the bosom of his family. And a very well-provided-for family, too.

All this time the Liberal deputation from Darlford—two aldermen, three town-councillors, and the secretary of the Reform Association, were walking about London like mad things, eating luncheons and looking for a candidate. They called at the Reform Club twenty times in the morning, badgered whips and red-tapers, were introduced to candidates, badgered candidates; examined would-be members as if they were at a cattle-show, listened to political pedigrees, dictated political pledges, referred to Hansard to see how men had voted, inquired whether men had spoken, finally discussed terms. But they never could hit the right man. If the principles were right, there was no money; and if money were ready, money would not take pledges. In fact, they wanted a Phœnix: a very rich man, who would do exactly as they liked, with extremely low opinions and with very high connections.

"If he would go for the ballot and had a handle to his name, it would have the best effect," said the secretary of the Reform Association, "because you see we are fighting against a Right Honourable, and you have no idea how that takes with the mob."

The deputation had been three days in town, and urged by despatches by every train to bring affairs to a conclusion, jaded, perplexed, confused, they were ready to fall into the hands of the first jobber or bold adventurer. They discussed over their dinner at a Strand Coffee-house the claims of the various candidates who had presented themselves. Mr. Donald Macpherson Macfarlane, who would only pay the legal expenses; he was soon despatched. Mr. Gingerly Browne, of Jermyn Street, the younger son of a Baronet, who would go as far as 1000*l.* provided the seat was secured. Mr. Juggins, a distiller, 2000*l.* man; but would not agree to any annual subscriptions. Sir Baptist Placid, vague about expenditure, but repeatedly declaring that "there could be no difficulty on that head." He however had a moral objection to subscribing to the races,—and that was a great point at Darlford. Sir Baptist would subscribe a guinea per annum to the Infirmary, and the same to all religious societies without any distinction of sects—but races, it was not the sum, 100*l.* per annum, but the principle. He had a moral objection.

In short, the deputation began to suspect, what was the truth, that they were a day after the fair, and that all the electioneering rips that swarm in the purlieus of political clubs during an impending dissolution of Parliament, men who become political characters in their small circle, because they have been talked of as once having an intention to stand for places for which they never

offered themselves, or for having stood for places where they never could by any circumstance have succeeded, were in fact nibbling at their dainty morsel.

At this moment of despair, a ray of hope was imparted to them by a confidential note from a secretary of the Treasury, who wished to see them at the Reform Club on the morrow. You may be sure they were punctual to their appointment. The secretary received them with great consideration. He had got them a candidate, and one of high mark—the son of a Peer, and connected with the highest Whig houses. Their eyes sparkled. A real honourable. If they liked he would introduce them immediately to the Honourable Alberic De Crecy. He had only to introduce them, as there was no difficulty either as to means or opinions, expenses or pledges.

The secretary returned with a young gentleman, whose diminutive stature would seem, from his smooth and singularly puerile countenance, to be merely the consequence of his very tender years; but Mr. De Crecy was really of age, or at least would be by the nomination-day. He did not say a word, but looked like the rosebud which dangled in the button-hole of his frock-coat. The aldermen and town-councillors were what is sometimes emphatically styled flabbergasted; they were speechless from bewilderment. "Mr. De Crecy will go for the ballot," said the secretary of the Treasury, with an audacious eye and a demure look, "and for Total and Immediate, if you press him hard; but don't, if you can help it, because he has an uncle, an old county member, who has prejudices, and might disinherit him. However, we answer for him. And I am very happy that I have been the means of bringing about an arrangement which, I feel, will be mutually advantageous." And so saying, the secretary effected his escape.

Circumstances, however, retarded for a season the political career of the Honourable Alberic De Crecy. While the Liberal party at Darlford were suffering under the daily inflictions of Mr. Rigby's slashing style, and the post brought them very unsatisfactory prospects of a champion, one offered himself, and in an address which intimated that he was no man of straw, likely to recede from any contest in which he chose to embark. The town was suddenly placarded with a letter to the Independent Electors from Mr. Millbank, the new proprietor of Hellingsley.

He expressed himself as one not anxious to obtrude himself on their attention, and founding no claim to their confidence on his recent acquisition; but at the same time as one resolved that the free and enlightened community, with which he must necessarily hereafter be much connected, should not become the nomination borough of any Peer of the realm without a struggle, if they chose

to make one. And so he offered himself if they could not find a better candidate, without waiting for the ceremony of a requisition. He was exactly the man they wanted; and though he had "no handle to his name," and was somewhat impracticable about pledges, his fortune was so great, and his character so high, that it might be hoped that the people would be almost as content as if they were appealed to by some obscure scion of factitious nobility, subscribing to political engagements which he could not comprehend, and which, in general, are vomited with as much facility as they are swallowed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE people of Darlford, who, as long as the contest for their representation remained between Mr. Rigby and the abstraction called Liberal Principles, appeared to be very indifferent about the result, the moment they learned that for the phrase had been substituted a substance, and that, too, in the form of a gentleman who was soon to figure as their resident neighbour, became excited, speedily enthusiastic. All the bells of all the churches rang when Mr. Millbank commenced his canvass; the Conservatives, on the alert, if not alarmed, insisted on their champion also showing himself in all directions; and in the course of four-and-twenty hours, such is the contagion of popular feeling, the town was divided into two parties, the vast majority of which were firmly convinced that the country could only be saved by the return of Mr. Rigby, or preserved from inevitable destruction by the election of Mr. Millbank.

The results of the two canvasses were such as had been anticipated from the previous reports of the respective agents and supporters. In these days the personal canvass of a candidate is a mere form. The whole country that is to be invaded has been surveyed and mapped out before entry; every position reconnoitred; the chain of communications completed. In the present case, as was not unusual, both candidates were really supported by numerous and reputable adherents; and both had very good grounds for believing that they would be ultimately successful. But there was a body of the electors sufficiently numerous to turn the election, who would not promise their votes: conscientious men who felt the responsibility of the duty that the constitution had entrusted to their discharge, and who would not make up their minds without duly weighing the respective merits of the two rivals. This class of deeply meditative individuals are distinguished not only by their pensive turn of mind, but by a charitable

vein that seems to pervade their being. Not only will they think of your request, but for their parts they wish both sides equally well. Decision, indeed, as it must dash the hopes of one of their solicitors, seems infinitely painful to them; they have always a good reason for postponing it. If you seek their suffrage during the canvass, they reply, that the writ not having come down, the day of election is not yet fixed. If you call again to inform them that the writ has arrived, they rejoin, that perhaps after all there may not be a contest. If you call a third time, half dead with fatigue, to give them friendly notice that both you and your rival have pledged yourselves to go to the poll, they twitch their trousers, rub their hands, and with a dull grin observe,—

"Well, sir, we shall see."

"Come, Mr. Jobson," says one of the committee, with an insinuating smile, "give Mr. Millbank one."

"Jobson, I think you and I know each other," says a most influential supporter, with a knowing nod.

"Yes, Mr. Smith, I should think we did."

"Come, come, give us one"

"Well, I have not made up my mind yet, gentlemen."

"Jobson!" says a solemn voice, "didn't you tell me the other night you wished well to this gentleman?"

"So I do; I wish well to everybody," replies the imperturbable Jobson.

"Well, Jobson," exclaims another member of the committee, with a sigh, "who could have supposed that you would have been an enemy?"

"I don't wish to be no enemy to no man, Mr. Trip."

"Come, Jobson," says a jolly tanner, "if I wanted to be a parliament man, I don't think you could refuse me one!"

"I don't think I could, Mr. Oakfield."

"Well, then, give it to my friend."

"Well, sir, I'll think about it."

"Leave him to me," says another member of the committee, with a significant look. "I know how to get round him. It's all right."

"Yes, leave him to Hayfield, Mr. Millbank; he knows how to manage him."

But all the same, Jobson continues to look as little tractable and lamb-like as can be well fancied.

And here, in a work which, in an unpretending shape, aspires to take neither an uninformed nor a partial view of the political history of the ten eventful years of the Reform struggle, we should pause for a moment to observe the strangeness, that only five years after the reconstruction of the electoral body by the Whig

party, in a borough called into political existence by their policy, a manufacturing town, too, the candidate comprising in his person every quality and circumstance which could recommend him to the constituency, and his opponent the worst specimen of the Old Generation, a political adventurer, who owed the least disreputable part of his notoriety to his opposition to the Reform Bill; that in such a borough, under such circumstances, there should be a contest, and that, too, one of a very doubtful issue.

What was the cause of this? Are we to seek it in the "Reaction" of the Tadpoles and the Tapers? That would not be a very satisfactory solution. Reaction, to a certain extent, is the law of human existence. In the particular state of affairs before us—England after the Reform Act—it never could be doubtful that Time would gradually, and in some instances rapidly, counteract the national impulse of 1832. There never could have been a question, for example, that the English counties would have reverted to their natural allegiance to their proprietors; but the results of the appeals to the third Estate in 1835 and 1837 are not to be accounted for by a mere readjustment of legitimate influences.

The truth is, that, considerable as are the abilities of the Whig leaders, highly accomplished as many of them unquestionably must be acknowledged in parliamentary debate, experienced in council, sedulous in office, eminent as scholars, powerful from their position, the absence of individual influence, and of the pervading authority of a commanding mind, have been the cause of the fall of the Whig party.

Such a supremacy was generally acknowledged in Lord Grey on the accession of this party to power: but it was the supremacy of a tradition rather than of a fact. Almost at the outset of his authority his successor was indicated. When the crisis arrived, the intended successor was not in the Whig ranks. It is in this virtual absence of a real and recognised leader, almost from the moment that they passed their great measure, that we must seek a chief cause of all that insubordination, all those distempered ambitions, and all those dark intrigues, that finally broke up, not only the Whig government, but the Whig party; demoralised their ranks, and sent them to the country, both in 1835 and 1837, with every illusion, which had operated so happily in their favour in 1832, scattered to the winds. In all things we trace the irresistible influence of the individual.

And yet the interval that elapsed between 1835 and 1837 proved, that there was all this time in the Whig array one entirely competent to the office of leading a great party, though his capacity for that fulfilment was too tardily recognised.

Lord John Russell has that degree of imagination, which, though evinced rather in sentiment than expression, still enables him to generalise from the details of his reading and experience; and to take those comprehensive views, which, however easily depreciated by ordinary men in an age of routine, are indispensable to a statesman in the conjunctures in which we live. He understands, therefore, his position; and he has the moral intrepidity which prompts him ever to dare that which his intellect assures him is politic. He is consequently, at the same time, sagacious and bold in council. As an administrator he is prompt and indefatigable. He is not a natural orator, and labours under physical deficiencies which even a Demosthenic impulse could scarcely overcome. But he is experienced in debate, quick in reply, fertile in resource, takes large views, and frequently compensates for a dry and hesitating manner by the expression of those noble truths that flash across the fancy, and rise spontaneously to the lip, of men of poetic temperament when addressing popular assemblies. If we add to this, a private life of dignified repute, the accidents of his birth and rank, which never can be severed from the man, the scion of a great historic family, and born, as it were, to the hereditary service of the State, it is difficult to ascertain at what period, or under what circumstances, the Whig party have ever possessed, or could obtain, a more efficient leader.

But we must return to the Darlford election. The class of thoughtful voters was sufficiently numerous in that borough to render the result of the contest doubtful to the last; and on the eve of the day of nomination both parties were equally sanguine.

Nomination-day altogether is a most unsatisfactory affair. There is little to be done, and that little mere form. The tedious hours remain, and no one can settle his mind to anything. It is not a holiday, for every one is serious; it is not business, for no one can attend to it; it is not a contest, for there is no canvassing; nor an election, for there is no poll. It is a day of lounging without an object, and luncheons without an appetite; of hopes and fears; confidence and dejection; bravado bets and secret hedging; and, about midnight, of furious suppers of grilled bones, brandy-and-water, and recklessness.

The president and vice-president of the Conservative Association, the secretary and the four solicitors who were agents, had impressed upon Mr. Rigby that it was of the utmost importance, and must produce a great moral effect, if he obtained the show of hands. With his powers of eloquence and their secret organisation, they flattered themselves it might be done. With this view, Rigby inflicted a speech of more than two hours' duration on the electors, who bore it very kindly, as the mob likes, above all

things, that the ceremonies of nomination-day should not be cut short: moreover, there is nothing that the mob likes so much as a speech. Rigby therefore had, on the whole, a far from unfavourable audience, and he availed himself of their forbearance. He brought in his crack theme, the guillotine, and dilated so elaborately upon its qualities, that one of the gentlemen below could not refrain from exclaiming, "I wish you may get it." This exclamation gave Mr. Rigby what is called a great opening, which like a practised speaker, he immediately seized. He denounced the sentiment as "un-English," and got very much cheered. Excited by this success, Rigby began to call everything else "un-English" with which he did not agree, until menacing murmurs began to rise, when he shifted the subject, and rose into a grand peroration, in which he assured them that the eyes of the whole empire were on this particular election (cries of "That's true," from all sides), and that England expected every man to do his duty.

"And who do you expect to do yours?" inquired a gentleman below, "about that ere pension?"

"Rigby," screeched a hoarse voice, "don't you mind; you guv it them well."

"Rigby, keep up your spirits, old chap: we will have you."

"Now!" said a stentorian voice; and a man as tall as Saul looked round him. This was the engaged leader of the Conservative mob; the eye of every one of his minions was instantly on him. "Now! Our young Queen and our old institutions! Rigby for ever!"

This was a signal for the instant appearance of the leader of the Liberal mob. Magog Wrath, not so tall as Bully Bluck his rival, had a voice almost as powerful, a back much broader, and a countenance far more forbidding. "Now, my boys; the Queen and Millbank for ever!"

These rival cries were the signals for a fight between the two bands of gladiators in the face of the hustings; the body of the people little interfering. Bully Bluck seized Magog Wrath's colours; they wrestled, they seized each other; their supporters were engaged in mutual contest; it appeared to be a most alarming and perilous fray; several ladies from the windows screamed, one fainted; a band of special constables pushed their way through the mob; you heard their staves resounding on the skulls of all who opposed them, especially the little boys: order was at length restored; and, to tell the truth, the only hurts inflicted were those which came from the special constables. Bully Bluck and Magog Wrath, with all their fierce looks, flaunting colours, loud cheers, and desperate assaults, were, after all, only a couple of Con-

dottieri, who were cautious never to wound each other. They were, in fact, a very peaceful police, who kept the town in awe, and prevented others from being mischievous who were more inclined to do harm. Their hired gangs were the safety-valves for all the scamps of the borough, who, receiving a few shillings per head for their nominal service, and as much drink as they liked after the contest, were bribed and organised into peace and sobriety on the days in which their excesses were most to be apprehended.

Now Mr. Millbank came forward: he was very brief compared with Mr. Rigby; but clear and terse. No one could misunderstand him. He did not favour his hearers with any history, but gave them his views about taxes, free trade, placemen, and pensioners, whoever and wherever they might be.

"Hilloa, Rigby, about that ere pension?"

"Millbank for ever! We will have him."

"Never mind, Rigby, you'll come in next time."

Mr. Millbank was very energetic about resident representatives, but did not understand that a resident representative meant the nominee of a great Lord, who lived in a great castle (great cheering). There was a Lord once who declared that, if he liked, he would return his negro valet to Parliament; but Mr. Millbank thought those days were over. It remained for the people of Darlford to determine whether he was mistaken.

"Never!" exclaimed the mob. "Millbank for ever! Rigby in the river! No niggers, no walets!"

"Three groans for Rigby."

"His language ain't as purty as the Lunnun chap's," said a critic below; "but he speaks from his 'art: and give me the man who 'as got a 'art."

"That's your time of day, Mr. Robinson."

"Now!" said Magog Wrath, looking around. "Now, the Queen and Millbank for ever! Hurrah!"

The show of hands was entirely in favour of Mr. Millbank. Scarcely a hand was held up for Mr. Rigby below, except by Bully Bluck and his prætorians. The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Association, the Secretary and the four agents, severally and respectively went up to Mr. Rigby and congratulated him on the result, as it was a known fact, "that the show of hands never won."

The eve of polling-day was now at hand. This is the most critical period of an election. All night parties in disguise were perambulating the different wards, watching each other's tactics; masks, wigs, false noses, gentles in livery coats, men in female attire—a silent carnival of manœuvre, vigilance, anxiety, and

trepidation. The thoughtful voters about this time make up their minds; the enthusiasts who have told you twenty times a-day for the last fortnight, that they would get up in the middle of the night to serve you, require the most watchful cooping; all the individuals who have assured you that "their word is their bond," change sides.

Two of the Rigbyites met in the market-place about an hour after midnight.

"Well, how goes it?" said one.

"I have been the rounds. The blunt's going like the ward-pump. I saw a man come out of Moffatt's house, muffled up with a mask on. I dodged him. It was Biggs."

"You don't mean that, do you? D—e, I'll answer for Moffatt."

"I never thought he was a true man."

"Told Robins?"

"I could not see him; but I met young Gunning and told him."

"Young Gunning! That won't do."

"I thought he was as right as the town clock."

"So did I, once. Hush! who comes here? The enemy, Franklin and Sampson Potts. Keep close."

"I'll speak to them. Good night, Potts. Up rather late to-night?"

"All fair election time. You ain't snoring, are you?"

"Well, I hope the best man will win."

"I am sure he will."

"You must go for Moffatt early, to breakfast at the White Lion; that's your sort. Don't leave him, and poll him yourself. I am going off to Solomon Lacey's. He has got four Millbankites cooped up very drunk, and I want to get them quietly into the country before daybreak."

'Tis polling day! The candidates are roused from their slumbers at an early hour by the music of their own bands perambulating the town, and each playing the "conquering hero" to sustain the courage of their jaded employers, by depriving them of that rest which can alone tranquillise the nervous system. There is something in that matin burst of music, followed by a shrill cheer from the boys of the borough, the only inhabitants yet up, that is very depressing.

The committee-rooms of each candidate are soon rife with black reports; each side has received fearful bulletins of the preceding night campaign; and its consequences as exemplified in the morning, unprecedented tergiversations, mysterious absences; men who breakfast with one side and vote with the other; men who won't come to breakfast; men who won't leave breakfast.

At ten o'clock Mr. Rigby was in a majority of twenty-eight.

The polling was very brisk and very equal until the middle of the day, when it became very slack. Mr. Rigby kept a majority, but an inconsiderable one. Mr. Millbank's friends were not disheartened, as it was known that the leading members of Mr. Rigby's Committee had polled; whereas his opponent's were principally reserved. At a quarter-past two there was great cheering and uproar. The four voters in favour of Millbank, whom Solomon Lacey had cooped up, made drunk, and carried into the country, had recovered their senses, made their escape, and voted as they originally intended. Soon after this, Mr. Millbank was declared by his Committee to be in a majority of one, but the Committee of Mr. Rigby instantly posted a placard, in large letters, to announce that, on the contrary, their man was in a majority of nine.

"If we could only have got another registration," whispered the principal agent to Mr. Rigby, at a quarter-past four.

"You think it's all over, then?"

"Why, I do not see now how we can win. We have polled all our dead men, and Millbank is seven a-head"

"I have no doubt we shall be able to have a good petition," said the consoling chairman of the Conservative Association.

CHAPTER V.

It was not with feelings of extreme satisfaction that Mr. Rigby returned to London. The loss of Hellingsley, followed by the loss of the borough to Hellingsley's successful master, were not precisely the incidents which would be adduced as evidence of Mr. Rigby's good management or good fortune. Hitherto that gentleman had persuaded the world that he was not only very clever, but that he was also always in luck; a quality which many appreciate more even than capacity. His reputation was unquestionably damaged, both with his patron and his party. But what the Tapers and the Tadpoles thought or said, what even might be the injurious effect on his own career of the loss of this election, assumed an insignificant character when compared with its influence on the temper and disposition of the Marquess of Monmouth.

And yet his carriage is now entering the court-yard of Monmouth House, and, in all probability, a few minutes would introduce him to that presence before which he had, ere this, trembled. The Marquess was at home, and anxious to see Mr. Rigby. In a very few minutes that gentleman was ascending the private staircase, entering the antechamber, and waiting to be received in the little saloon, exactly as our Coningsby did more than five years ago, scarcely less agitated, but by feelings of a very different character.

"Well, you made a good fight of it," exclaimed the Marquess, in a cheerful and particularly cordial tone, as Mr. Rigby entered his dressing-room. "Patience! We shall win next time."

This reception instantly reassured the defeated candidate, though its contrast to that which he expected rather perplexed him. He entered into the details of the election, talked rapidly of the next registration, the propriety of petitioning; accustomed himself to hearing his voice with its habitual volubility in a chamber where he had feared it might not sound for some time.

"D—n politics!" said the Marquess. "These fellows are in for this Parliament, and I am really weary of the whole affair. I begin to think the Duke was right, and it would have been best to have left them to themselves. I am glad you have come up at once, for I want you. The fact is, I am going to be married."

This was not a startling announcement to Mr. Rigby; he was prepared for it, though scarcely could have hoped that he would have been favoured with it on the present occasion, instead of a morose comment on his misfortunes. Marriage, then, was the predominant idea of Lord Monmouth at the present moment, in whose absorbing interest all vexations were forgotten. Fortunate Rigby! Disgusted by the failure of his political combinations, his disappointments in not dictating to the county and not carrying the borough, and the slight prospect at present of obtaining the great object of his ambition, Lord Monmouth had resolved to precipitate his fate, was about to marry immediately, and quit England.

"You will be wanted, Rigby," continued the Marquess. "We must have a couple of trustees, and I have thought of you as one. You know you are my executor; and it is better not to bring in unnecessarily new names into the management of my affairs. Lord Eskdale will act with you."

Rigby then, after all, was a lucky man. After such a succession of failures, he had returned only to receive fresh and the most delicate marks of his patron's good feeling and consideration. Lord Monmouth's trustee and executor! "You know you are my executor." Sublime truth! It ought to be blazoned in letters of gold in the most conspicuous part of Rigby's library, to remind him perpetually of his great and impending destiny. Lord Monmouth's executor, and very probably one of his residuary legatees! A legatee of some sort he knew he was. What a splendid *memento mori!* What cared Rigby for the borough of Darlford? And as for his political friends, he wished them joy of their barren benches. Nothing was lost by not being in this Parliament.

It was then with sincerity that Rigby offered his congratulations to his patron. He praised the judicious alliance, accompanied by every circumstance conducive to worldly happiness; distinguished

beauty, perfect temper, princely rank. Rigby, who had hardly got out of his hustings vein, was most eloquent in his praises of Madame Colonna.

"A very amiable woman," said Lord Monmouth, "and very handsome. I always admired her; and a very agreeable person too; I dare say a very good temper, but I am not going to marry her."

"Might I then ask who is—— "

"Her step-daughter, the Princess Lucretia," replied the Marquess, very quietly, and looking at his ring.

Here was a thunderbolt! Rigby had made another mistake. He had been working all this time for the wrong woman! The consciousness of being a trustee alone sustained him. There was an inevitable pause. The Marquess would not speak, however, and Rigby must. He babbled rather incoherently about the Princess Lucretia being admired by everybody; also that she was the most fortunate of women, as well as the most accomplished; he was just beginning to say he had known her from a child, when discretion stopped his tongue, which had a habit of running on somewhat rashly; but Rigby, though he often blundered in his talk, had the talent of extricating himself from the consequence of his mistakes.

"And Madame must be highly gratified by all this?" observed Mr. Rigby, with an inquiring accent. He was dying to learn how she had first received the intelligence, and congratulated himself that his absence at his contest had preserved him from the storm.

"Madame Colonna knows nothing of our intentions," said Lord Monmouth. "And by the bye, that is the very business on which I wish to see you, Rigby. I wish you to communicate them to her. We are to be married, and immediately. It would gratify me that the wife of Lucretia's father should attend our wedding. You understand exactly what I mean, Rigby—I must have no scenes. Always happy to see the Princess Colonna under my roof: but then I like to live quietly, particularly at present; harassed as I have been by the loss of these elections, by all this bad management, and by all these disappointments on subjects in which I was led to believe success was certain. Madame Colonna is at home;" and the Marquess bowed Mr. Rigby out of the room.

CHAPTER VI.

THE departure of Sidonia from Coningsby Castle, in the autumn, determined the Princess Lucretia on a step which had for some time before his arrival occupied her brooding imagination. Nature

had bestowed on this lady an ambitious soul and a subtile spirit; she could dare much and could execute finely. Above all things she coveted power; and though not free from the characteristic susceptibility of her sex, the qualities that could engage her passions or fascinate her fancy must partake of that intellectual eminence which distinguished her. Though the Princess Lucretia in a short space of time had seen much of the world, she had as yet encountered no hero. In the admirers whom her rank, and sometimes her intelligence, assembled around her, her master had not yet appeared. Her heart had not trembled before any of those brilliant forms whom she was told her sex admired; nor did she envy any one the homage which she did not appreciate. There was, therefore, no disturbing element in the worldly calculations which she applied to that question which is, to woman, what a career is to man, the question of marriage. She would marry to gain power, and therefore she wished to marry the powerful. Lord Eskdale hovered around her, and she liked him. She admired his incomparable shrewdness; his freedom from ordinary prejudices, the selfishness which was always good-natured, and the imperturbability that was not callous. But Lord Eskdale had hovered round many; it was his easy habit. He liked clever women, young but who had seen something of the world. The Princess Lucretia pleased him much; with the form and mind of a woman even in the nursery. He had watched her development with interest and had witnessed her launched in that world where she floated at once with as much dignity and consciousness of superior power as if she had braved for seasons its waves and its tempests.

Musing over Lord Eskdale, the mind of Lucretia was drawn to the image of his friend—her friend—the friend of her parents. And why not marry Lord Monmouth? The idea pleased her. There was something great in the conception; difficult and strange. The result, if achieved, would give her all that she desired. She devoted her mind to this secret thought. She had no confidants. She concentrated her intellect on one point, and that was to fascinate the grandfather of Coningsby, while her step-mother was plotting that she should marry his grandson. The volition of Lucretia Colonna was, if not supreme, of a power most difficult to resist. There was something charm-like and alluring in the conversation of one who was silent to all others; something in the tones of her low rich voice which acted singularly on the nervous system. It was the voice of the serpent; indeed, there was an undulating movement in Lucretia, when she approached you, which irresistibly reminded you of that mysterious animal.

Lord Monmouth was not insensible to the spell, though totally unconscious of its purpose. He found the society of Lucretia very

agreeable to him; she was animated, intelligent, original; her inquiries were stimulating; her comments on what she saw, and heard, and read, racy and often indicating a fine humour. But all this was reserved for his ear. Before her parents, as before all others, Lucretia was silent, a little scornful, never communicating, neither giving nor seeking amusement, shut up in herself.

Lord Monmouth fell therefore into the habit of riding and driving with Lucretia alone. It was an arrangement which he found made his life more pleasant. Nor was it displeasing to Madame Colonna. She looked upon Lord Monmouth's fancy for Lucretia as a fresh tie for them all. Even the Prince, when his wife called his attention to the circumstance, observed it with satisfaction. It was a circumstance which represented in his mind a continuance of good eating and good drinking, fine horses, luxurious baths, unceasing billiards.

In this state of affairs appeared Sidonia, known before to her step-mother, but seen by Lucretia for the first time. Truly, he came, saw, and conquered. Those eyes that rarely met another's, were fixed upon his searching yet unimpassioned glance. She listened to that voice, full of music yet void of tenderness: and the spirit of Lucretia Colonna bowed before an intelligence that commanded sympathy, yet offered none.

Lucretia naturally possessed great qualities as well as great talents. Under a genial influence, her education might have formed a being capable of imparting and receiving happiness. But she found herself without a guide. Her father offered her no love; her step-mother gained from her no respect. Her literary education was the result of her own strong mind and inquisitive spirit. She valued knowledge, and she therefore acquired it. But not a single moral principle or a single religious truth had ever been instilled into her being. Frequent absence from her own country had by degrees broken off even an habitual observance of the forms of her creed; while a life of undisturbed indulgence, void of all anxiety and care, while it preserved her from many of the temptations to vice, deprived her of that wisdom, "more precious than rubies," which adversity and affliction, the struggles and the sorrows of existence, can alone impart.

Lucretia had passed her life in a refined, but rather dissolute society. Not indeed that a word that could call forth a maiden blush, conduct that could pain the purest feelings, could be heard or witnessed in those polished and luxurious circles. The most exquisite taste pervaded their atmosphere; and the uninitiated who found themselves in those perfumed chambers and those golden saloons, might believe, from all that passed before them, that their inhabitants were as pure, as orderly, and as irreproachable as their

furniture. But among the habitual dwellers in these delicate halls there was a tacit understanding, a prevalent doctrine that required no formal exposition, no proofs and illustrations, no comment and no gloss; which was indeed rather a traditional conviction than an imparted dogma—that the exoteric public were, on many subjects, the victims of very vulgar prejudices, which these enlightened personages wished neither to disturb nor to adopt.

A being of such a temper, bred in such a manner; a woman full of intellect and ambition, daring and lawless, and satiated with prosperity, is not made for equable fortunes and an uniform existence. She would have sacrificed the world for Sidonia, for he had touched the fervent imagination that none before could approach; but that inscrutable man would not read the secret of her heart; and prompted alike by pique, the love of power, and a weariness of her present life, Lucretia resolved on that great result which Mr. Rigby is now about to communicate to the Princess Colonna.

About half-an-hour after Mr. Rigby had entered that lady's apartments it seemed that all the bells of Monmouth House were ringing at the same time. The sound even reached the Marquess in his luxurious recess; who immediately took a pinch of snuff, and ordered his valet to lock the door of the ante-chamber. The Princess Lucretia, too, heard the sounds; she was lying on a sofa in her boudoir, reading the "Inferno," and immediately mustered her garrison in the form of a French maid, and gave directions that no one should be admitted. Both the Marquess and his intended bride felt that a crisis was at hand, and resolved to participate in no scenes.

The ringing ceased; there was again silence. Then there was another ring; a very short, hasty, and violent pull; followed by some slamming of doors. The servants, who were all on the alert, and had advantages of hearing and observation denied to their secluded master, caught a glimpse of Mr. Rigby endeavouring gently to draw back into her apartments Madame Colonna, furious amid his deprecatory exclamations.

"For heaven's sake, my dear Madame; for your own sake—now really—now I assure you—you are quite wrong—you are indeed—it is a complete misapprehension—I will explain everything. I entreat—I implore—whatever you like—just what you please—only listen."

Then the lady, with a mantling visage and flashing eye, violently closing the door, was again lost to their sight. A few minutes after, there was a moderate ring, and Mr. Rigby, coming out of the apartments, with his cravat a little out of order, as if he had had a violent shaking, met the servant who would have entered.

"Order Madame Colonna's travelling carriage," he exclaimed in a loud voice, "and send Mademoiselle Conrad here directly. I don't think the fellow hears me," added Mr. Rigby, and following the servant, he added in a low tone and with a significant glance, "No travelling carriage; no Mademoiselle 'Conrad; order the britska round as usual."

Nearly another hour passed; there was another ring; very moderate indeed. The servant was informed that Madame Colonna was coming down; and she appeared as usual. In a beautiful morning dress, and leaning on the arm of Mr. Rigby, she descended the stairs, and was handed into her carriage by that gentleman, who, seating himself by her side, ordered them to drive to Richmond.

Lord Monmouth having been informed that all was calm, and that Madame Colonna, attended by Mr. Rigby, had gone to Richmond, ordered his carriage, and accompanied by Lucretia and Lucian Gay, departed immediately for Blackwall, where, in whitebait, a quiet bottle of claret, the society of his agreeable friends, and the contemplation of the passing steamers, he found a mild distraction and an amusing repose.

Mr. Rigby reported that evening to the Marquess on his return, that all was arranged and tranquil. Perhaps he exaggerated the difficulties, to increase the service; but according to his account they were very considerable. It required some time to make Madame Colonna comprehend the nature of his communication. All Rigby's diplomatic skill was expended in the gradual development. When it was once fairly put before her, the effect was appalling. That was the first great ringing of bells. Rigby softened a little what he had personally endured; but he confessed she sprang at him like a tigress balked of her prey, and poured forth on him a volume of epithets, many of which Rigby really deserved. But after all, in the present instance, he was not treacherous, only base, which he always was. Then she fell into a passion of tears, and vowed frequently that she was not weeping for herself, but only for that dear Mr. Coningsby, who had been treated so infamously and robbed of Lucretia, and whose heart she knew must break. It seemed that Rigby stemmed the first violence of her emotion by mysterious intimations of an important communication that he had to make; and piquing her curiosity, he calmed her passion. But really having nothing to say, he was nearly involved in fresh dangers. He took refuge in the affectation of great agitation which prevented exposition. The lady then insisted on her travelling carriage being ordered and packed, as she was determined to set out for Rome that afternoon. This little occurrence gave Rigby some few minutes

to collect himself, at the end of which he made the Princess several announcements of intended arrangements, all of which pleased her mightily, though they were so inconsistent with each other, that if she had not been a woman in a passion, she must have detected that Rigby was lying. He assured her almost in the same breath, that she was never to be separated from them, and that she was to have any establishment in any country she liked. He talked wildly of equipages, diamonds, shawls, opera-boxes; and while her mind was bewildered with these dazzling objects, he, with intrepid gravity, consulted her as to the exact amount she would like to have apportioned, independent of her general revenue, for the purposes of charity.

At the end of two hours, exhausted by her rage and soothed by these visions, Madame Colonna having grown calm and reasonable, sighed and murmured a complaint, that Lord Monmouth ought to have communicated this important intelligence in person. Upon this Rigby instantly assured her, that Lord Monmouth had been for some time waiting to do so, but in consequence of her lengthened interview with Rigby, his Lordship had departed for Richmond with Lucretia, where he hoped that Madame Colonna and Mr. Rigby would join him. So it ended, with a morning drive and suburban dinner; Rigby, after what he had gone through, finding no difficulty in accounting for the other guests not being present, and bringing home Madame Colonna in the evening, at times almost as gay and good-tempered as usual, and almost oblivious of her disappointment.

When the Marquess met Madame Colonna he embraced her with great courtliness, and from that time consulted her on every arrangement. He took a very early occasion of presenting her with a diamond necklace of great value. The Marquess was fond of making presents to persons to whom he thought he had not behaved very well, and who yet spared him scenes.

The marriage speedily followed, by special license, at the villa of the Right Hon. Nicholas Rigby, who gave away the bride. The wedding was very select, but brilliant as the diamond necklace: a royal Duke and Duchess, Lady St. Julians, and a few others. Mr. Ormsby presented the bride with a bouquet of precious stones, and Lord Eskdale with a French fan in a diamond frame. It was a fine day; Lord Monmouth, calm as if he were winning the St. Leger; Lucretia, universally recognised as a beauty; all the guests gay, the Princess Colonna especially.

The travelling carriage is at the door which is to bear away the happy pair. Madame Colonna embraces Lucretia; the Marquess gives a grand bow: they are gone. The guests remain awhile. A Prince of the blood will propose a toast; there is

another glass of champagne quaffed, another ortolan devoured; and then they rise and disperse. Madame Colonna leaves with Lady St. Julians, whose guest for a while she is to become. And in a few minutes their host is alone.

Mr. Rigby retired into his library: the repose of the chamber must have been grateful to his feelings after all this distraction. It was spacious, well-stored, classically adorned, and opened on a beautiful lawn. Rigby threw himself into an ample chair, crossed his legs, and resting his head on his arm, apparently fell into deep contemplation.

He had some cause for reflection, and though we did once venture to affirm that Rigby never either thought or felt, this perhaps may be the exception that proves the rule.

He could scarcely refrain from pondering over the strange event which he had witnessed, and at which he had assisted.

It was an incident that might exercise considerable influence over his fortunes. His patron married, and married to one who certainly did not offer to Mr. Rigby such a prospect of easy management as her step-mother! Here were new influences arising; new characters, new situations, new contingencies. Was he thinking of all this? He suddenly jumps up, hurries to a shelf and takes down a volume. It is his interleaved peerage, of which for twenty years he had been threatening an edition. Turning to the Marquisate of Monmouth, he took up his pen and thus made the necessary entry:—

"*Married, second time, August 3rd*, 1837, *The Princess Lucretia Colonna, daughter of Prince Paul Colonna, born at Rome, February 16th*, 1819."

That was what Mr. Rigby called "a great fact." There was not a peerage-compiler in England who had that date save himself.

Before we close this slight narrative of the domestic incidents that occurred in the family of his grandfather since Coningsby quitted the Castle, we must not forget to mention what happened to Villebecque and Flora. Lord Monmouth took a great liking to the manager. He found him very clever in many things independently of his profession; he was useful to Lord Monmouth, and did his work in an agreeable manner. And the future Lady Monmouth was accustomed to Flora, and found her useful too, and did not like to lose her. And so the Marquess, turning all the circumstances in his mind, and being convinced that Villebecque could never succeed to any extent in England in his profession, and probably nowhere else, appointed him, to Villebecque's infinite satisfaction, Intendant of his household, with a considerable salary, while Flora still lived with her kind step-father.

CHAPTER VII.

ANOTHER year elapsed; not so fruitful in incidents to Coningsby as the preceding ones, and yet not unprofitably passed. It had been spent in the almost unremitting cultivation of his intelligence. He had read deeply and extensively, digested his acquisitions, and had practised himself in surveying them, free from those conventional conclusions and those traditionary inferences that surrounded him. Although he had renounced his once cherished purpose of trying for University honours, an aim which he found discordant with the investigations on which his mind was bent, he had rarely quitted Cambridge. The society of his friends, the great convenience of public libraries, and the general tone of studious life around, rendered an University for him a genial residence. There is a moment in life, when the pride and thirst of knowledge seem to absorb our being, and so it happened now to Coningsby, who felt each day stronger in his intellectual resources, and each day more anxious and avid to increase them. The habits of public discussion fostered by the Debating Society were also for Coningsby no inconsiderable tie to the University. This was the arena in which he felt himself at home. The promise of his Eton days was here fulfilled. And while his friends listened to his sustained argument or his impassioned declamation, the prompt reply or the apt retort, they looked forward with pride through the vista of years to the time when the hero of the youthful Club should convince or dazzle in the senate. It is probable then that he would have remained at Cambridge with slight intervals until he had taken his degree, had not circumstances occurred which gave altogether a new turn to his thoughts.

When Lord Monmouth had fixed his wedding-day he had written himself to Coningsby to announce his intended marriage, and to request his grandson's presence at the ceremony. The letter was more than kind; it was warm and generous. He assured his grandson that this alliance should make no difference in the very ample provision which he had long intended for him; that he should ever esteem Coningsby his nearest relative; and that, while his death would bring to Coningsby as considerable an independence as an English gentleman need desire, so in his lifetime Coningsby should ever be supported as became his birth, breeding, and future prospects. Lord Monmouth had mentioned to Lucretia, that he was about to invite his grandson to their wedding, and the lady had received the intimation with satisfaction. It so happened that a few hours after, Lucretia, who now entered the

private rooms of Lord Monmouth without previously announcing her arrival, met Villebecque with the letter to Coningsby in his hand. Lucretia took it away from him, and said it should be posted with her own letters. It never reached its destination. Our friend learnt the marriage from the newspapers, which somewhat astounded him; but Coningsby was fond of his grandfather, and he wrote Lord Monmouth a letter of congratulation, full of feeling and ingenuousness, and which, while it much pleased the person to whom it was addressed, unintentionally convinced him that Coningsby had never received his original communication. Lord Monmouth spoke to Villebecque, who could throw sufficient light upon the subject, but it was never mentioned to Lady Monmouth. The Marquess was a man who always found out everything, and enjoyed the secret.

Rather more than a year after the marriage, when Coningsby had completed his twenty-first year, the year which he had passed so quietly at Cambridge, he received a letter from his grandfather, informing him that after a variety of movements Lady Monmouth and himself were established in Paris for the season, and desiring that he would not fail to come over as soon as practicable, and pay them as long a visit as the regulations of the University would permit. So, at the close of the December term, Coningsby quitted Cambridge for Paris.

Passing through London, he made his first visit to his banker at Charing Cross, on whom he had periodically drawn since he commenced his college life. He was in the outer counting-house, making some inquiries about a letter of credit, when one of the partners came out from an inner room, and invited him to enter. This firm had been for generations the bankers of the Coningsby family; and it appeared that there was a sealed box in their possession which had belonged to the father of Coningsby, and they wished to take this opportunity of delivering it to his son. This communication deeply interested him; and as he was alone in London, at an hotel, and on the wing for a foreign country, he requested permission at once to examine it, in order that he might again deposit it with them: so he was shown into a private room for that purpose. The seal was broken; the box was full of papers, chiefly correspondence: among them was a packet described as letters from "my dear Helen," the mother of Coningsby. In the interior of this packet, there was a miniature of that mother. He looked at it; put it down; looked at it again and again. He could not be mistaken. There was the same blue fillet in the bright hair. It was an exact copy of that portrait which had so greatly excited his attention when at Millbank! This was a mysterious and singularly perplexing incident. It greatly agitated

him. He was alone in the room when he made the discovery. When he had recovered himself, he sealed up the contents of the box, with the exception of his mother's letters and the miniature, which he took away with him, and then re-delivered it to his banker for custody until his return.

Coningsby found Lord and Lady Monmouth in a splendid hotel in the Faubourg St. Honoré, near the English Embassy. His grandfather looked at him with marked attention, and received him with evident satisfaction. Indeed, Lord Monmouth was greatly pleased that Harry had come to Paris; it was the University of the World, where everybody should graduate. Paris and London ought to be the great objects of all travellers; the rest was mere landscape.

It cannot be denied that between Lucretia and Coningsby there existed from the first a certain antipathy; and though circumstances for a short time had apparently removed or modified the aversion, the manner of the lady when Coningsby was ushered into her boudoir, resplendent with all that Parisian taste and luxury could devise, was characterised by that frigid politeness which had preceded the days of their more genial acquaintance. If the manner of Lucretia were the same as before her marriage, a considerable change might however be observed in her appearance. Her fine form had become more developed; while her dress, that she once totally neglected, was elaborate and gorgeous, and of the last mode. Lucretia was the fashion at Paris; a great lady, greatly admired. A guest under such a roof, however, Coningsby was at once launched into the most brilliant circles of Parisian society, which he found fascinating.

The art of society is, without doubt, perfectly comprehended and completely practised in the bright metropolis of France. An Englishman cannot enter a saloon without instantly feeling he is among a race more social than his compatriots. What, for example, is more consummate than the manner in which a French lady receives her guests! She unites graceful repose and unaffected dignity, with the most amiable regard for others. She sees every one; she speaks to every one; she sees them at the right moment; she says the right thing; it is utterly impossible to detect any difference in the position of her guests by the spirit in which she welcomes them. There is, indeed, throughout every circle of Parisian society, from the *château* to the *cabaret*, a sincere homage to intellect; and this without any maudlin sentiment. None sooner than the Parisians can draw the line between factitious notoriety and honest fame; or sooner distinguish between the counterfeit celebrity and the standard reputation. In England, we too often alternate between a supercilious neglect of genius

and a rhapsodical pursuit of quacks. In England, when a new character appears in our circles, the first question always is, "Who is he?" In France it is, "What is he?" In England, "How much a-year?" In France, "What has he done?"

CHAPTER VIII.

About a week after Coningsby's arrival in Paris, as he was sauntering on the soft and sunny Boulevards, soft and sunny though Christmas, he met Sidonia.

"So you are here?" said Sidonia. "Turn now with me, for I see you are only lounging, and tell me when you came, where you are, and what you have done since we parted. I have been here myself but a few days."

There was much to tell. And when Coningsby had rapidly related all that had passed, they talked of Paris. Sidonia had offered him hospitality, until he learned that Lord Monmouth was in Paris, and that Coningsby was his guest.

"I am sorry you cannot come to me," he remarked; "I would have shown you everybody and everything. But we shall meet often."

"I have already seen many remarkable things," said Coningsby; "and met many celebrated persons. Nothing strikes me more in this brilliant city than the tone of its society, so much higher than our own. What an absence of petty personalities! How much conversation, and how little gossip! Yet nowhere is there less pedantry. Here all women are as agreeable as is the remarkable privilege in London of some half-dozen. Men too, and great men, develope their minds. A great man in England, on the contrary, is generally the dullest dog in company. And yet, how piteous to think that so fair a civilisation should be in such imminent peril!"

"Yes! that is a common opinion; and yet I am somewhat sceptical of its truth," replied Sidonia. 'I am inclined to believe that the social system of England is in infinitely greater danger than that of France. We must not be misled by the agitated surface of this country. The foundations of its order are deep and sure. Learn to understand France. France is a Kingdom with a Republic for its capital. It has been always so, for centuries. From the days of the League to the days of the Sections, to the days of 1830. It is still France, little changed; and only more national; for it is less Frank and more Gallic; as England has become less Norman and more Saxon."

"And it is your opinion, then, that the present King may maintain himself?"

"Every movement in this country, however apparently discordant, seems to tend to that inevitable end. He would not be on the throne if the nature of things had not demanded his presence. The Kingdom of France required a Monarch; the Republic of Paris required a Dictator. He comprised in his person both qualifications; lineage and intellect; blood for the provinces, brains for the city."

"What a position! what an individual!" exclaimed Coningsby. "Tell me," he added, eagerly, "what is he? This Prince of whom one hears in all countries at all hours; on whose existence we are told the tranquillity, almost the civilisation, of Europe depends, yet of whom we receive accounts so conflicting, so contradictory; tell me, you who can tell me, tell me what he is."

Sidonia smiled at his earnestness. "I have a creed of mine own," he remarked, "that the great characters of antiquity are at rare epochs reproduced for our wonder, or our guidance. Nature, wearied with mediocrity, pours the warm metal into an heroic mould. When circumstances at length placed me in the presence of the King of France, I recognised—ULYSSES!"

"But is there no danger," resumed Coningsby, after the pause of a few moments, "that the Republic of Paris may absorb the Kingdom of France?"

"I suspect the reverse," replied Sidonia. "The tendency of advanced civilisation is in truth to pure Monarchy. Monarchy is indeed a government which requires a high degree of civilisation for its full development. It needs the support of free laws and manners, and of a widely-diffused intelligence. Political compromises are not to be tolerated except at periods of rude transition. An educated nation recoils from the imperfect vicariate of what is called a representative government. Your House of Commons, that has absorbed all other powers in the State, will in all probability fall more rapidly than it rose. Public opinion has a more direct, a more comprehensive, a more efficient organ for its utterance, than a body of men sectionally chosen. The Printing-press is a political element unknown to classic or feudal times. It absorbs in a great degree the duties of the Sovereign, the Priest, the Parliament; it controls, it educates, it discusses. That public opinion, when it acts, would appear in the form of one who has no class interests. In an enlightened age the Monarch on the throne, free from the vulgar prejudices and the corrupt interests of the subject, becomes again divine!"

At this moment they reached that part of the Boulevards which leads into the Place of the Madeleine, whither Sidonia was bound

and Coningsby was about to quit his companion, when Sidonia said:—

"I am only going a step over to the Rue Tronchet to say a few words to a friend of mine, M. P——s. I shall not detain you five minutes; and you should know him, for he has some capital pictures, and a collection of Limoges ware that is the despair of the dilettanti."

So saying they turned down by the Place of the Madeleine, and soon entered the court of the hotel of M. P——s. That gentleman received them in his gallery. After some general conversation, Coningsby turned towards the pictures, and left Sidonia with their host. The collection was rare, and interested Coningsby, though unacquainted with art. He sauntered on from picture to picture until he reached the end of the gallery, where an open door invited him into a suite of rooms also full of pictures and objects of curiosity and art. As he was entering a second chamber, he observed a lady leaning back in a cushioned chair, and looking earnestly on a picture. His entrance was unheard and unnoticed, for the lady's back was to the door; yet Coningsby advancing in an angular direction, obtained nearly a complete view of her countenance. It was upraised, gazing on the picture with an expression of delight; the bonnet thrown back, while the large sable cloak of the gazer had fallen partly off. The countenance was more beautiful than the beautiful picture. Those glowing shades of the gallery to which love, and genius, and devotion, had lent their inspiration, seemed without life and lustre by the radiant and expressive presence which Coningsby now beheld.

The finely-arched brow was a little elevated, the soft dark eyes were fully opened, the nostril of the delicate nose slightly dilated, the small, yet rich, full lips just parted; and over the clear, transparent visage there played a vivid glance of gratified intelligence.

The lady rose, advanced towards the picture, looked at it earnestly for a few moments, and then, turning in a direction opposite to Coningsby, walked away. She was somewhat above the middle stature, and yet could scarcely be called tall; a quality so rare, that even skilful dancers do not often possess it, was hers; that elastic gait that is so winning, and so often denotes the gaiety and quickness of the spirit.

The fair object of his observation had advanced into other chambers, and as soon as it was becoming, Coningsby followed her. She had joined a lady and gentleman, who were examining an ancient carving in ivory. The gentleman was middle-aged and portly; the elder lady tall and elegant, and with traces of interesting beauty. Coningsby heard her speak; the words were English, but the accent not of a native.

In the remotest part of the room, Coningsby, apparently engaged in examining some of that famous Limoges ware of which Sidonia had spoken, watched with interest and intentness the beautiful being whom he had followed, and whom he concluded to be the child of her companions. After some little time, they quitted the apartment on their return to the gallery; Coningsby remained behind, caring for none of the rare and fanciful objects that surrounded him, yet compelled, from the fear of seeming obtrusive, for some minutes to remain. Then he too returned to the gallery, and just as he had gained its end, he saw the portly gentleman in the distance shaking hands with Sidonia, the ladies apparently expressing their thanks and gratification to M. P——s, and then all vanishing by the door through which Coningsby had originally entered.

"What a beautiful countrywoman of yours!" said M. P——s, as Coningsby approached him.

"Is she my countrywoman? I am glad to hear it; I have been admiring her," he replied.

"Yes," said M. P——s, "it is Sir Wallinger: one of your deputies; don't you know him?"

"Sir Wallinger!" said Coningsby, "no, I have not that honour." He looked at Sidonia.

"Sir Joseph Wallinger," said Sidonia, "one of the new Whig baronets, and member for ——. I know him. He married a Spaniard. That is not his daughter, but his niece; the child of his wife's sister. It is not easy to find any one more beautiful."

END OF BOOK V.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

The knowledge that Sidonia was in Paris greatly agitated Lady Monmouth. She received the intimation indeed from Coningsby at dinner with sufficient art to conceal her emotion. Lord Monmouth himself was quite pleased at the announcement. Sidonia was his especial favourite; he knew so much, had such an excellent judgment, and was so rich. He had always something to tell you, was the best man in the world to bet on, and never wanted anything. A perfect character according to the Monmouth ethics.

In the evening of the day that Coningsby met Sidonia, Lady Monmouth made a little visit to the charming Duchess de G——t, who was "at home" every other night in her pretty hotel, with its embroidered white satin draperies, its fine old cabinets, and ancestral portraits of famous name, brave marshals and bright princesses of the olden time, on its walls. These receptions without form, yet full of elegance, are what English "at homes" were before the Continental war, though now, by a curious perversion of terms, the easy domestic title distinguishes in England a formally-prepared and elaborately-collected assembly, in which every thing and every person are careful to be as little "homely" as possible. In France, on the contrary, 'tis on these occasions, and in this manner, that society carries on that degree and kind of intercourse which in England we attempt awkwardly to maintain by the medium of that unpopular species of visitation styled a morning call; which all complain that they have either to make or to endure.

Nowhere was this species of reception more happily conducted than at the Duchess de G——t. The rooms, though small, decorated with taste, brightly illumined; a handsome and gracious hostess, the Duke the very pearl of gentlemen, and sons and daughters worthy of such parents. Every moment some one came in, and some one went away. In your way from a dinner to a ball, you stopped to exchange agreeable *on dits*. It seemed that every woman was pretty, every man a wit. Sure you were to find yourself surrounded by celebrities, and men were welcomed there, if they were clever, before they were famous, which showed it was a house that regarded intellect, and did not seek merely to gratify its vanity by being surrounded by the distinguished.

Enveloped in a rich Indian shawl, and leaning back on a sofa, Lady Monmouth was engaged in conversation with the courtly and classic Count M——é, when, on casually turning her head, she observed entering the saloon, Sidonia. She just caught his form bowing to the Duchess, and instantly turned her head and replunged into her conversation with increased interest. Lady Monmouth was a person who had the power of seeing all about her, everything and everybody, without appearing to look. She was conscious that Sidonia was approaching her neighbourhood. Her heart beat in tumult; she dreaded to catch the eye of that very individual whom she was so anxious to meet. He was advancing towards the sofa. Instinctively, Lady Monmouth turned from the Count, and began speaking earnestly to her other neighbour, a young daughter of the house, innocent and beautiful, not yet quite fledged, trying her wings in society under the maternal eye. She was surprised by the extreme interest which her grand neighbour suddenly took in all her pursuits, her studies, her daily walks in the Bois de Boulogne. Sidonia, as the Marchioness had anticipated, had now reached the sofa. But no, it was to the Count, and not to Lady Monmouth, that he was advancing; and they were immediately engaged in conversation. After some little time, when she had become accustomed to his voice, and found her own heart throbbing with less violence, Lucretia turned again, as if by accident, to the Count, and met the glance of Sidonia. She meant to have received him with haughtiness, but her self-command deserted her; and slightly rising from the sofa, she welcomed him with a countenance of extreme pallor and with some awkwardness.

His manner was such as might have assisted her, even had she been more troubled. It was marked by a degree of respectful friendliness. He expressed without reserve his pleasure at meeting her again; inquired much how she had passed her time since they last parted; asked more than once after the Marquess. The Count moved away; Sidonia took his seat. His ease and homage combined very greatly relieved her. She expressed to him how kind her Lord would consider his society, for the Marquess had suffered in health since Sidonia last saw him. His periodical gout had left him, which made him ill and nervous. The Marquess received his friends at dinner every day. Sidonia, particularly amiable, offered himself as a guest for the following one.

"And do you go to the great ball to-morrow?" inquired Lucretia, delighted with all that had occurred.

"I always go to their balls," said Sidonia, "I have promised."

There was a momentary pause; Lucretia, happier than she had been for a long time, her face a little flushed, and truly in a secret

tumult of sweet thoughts, remembered she had been long there, and offering her hand to Sidonia, bade him adieu until to-morrow; while he, as was his custom, soon repaired to the refined circle of the Countess de C—s—l—ne, a lady whose manners he always mentioned as his fair ideal, and whose house was his favourite haunt.

Before to-morrow comes, a word or two respecting two other characters of this history connected with the family of Lord Monmouth. And first of Flora. "La Petite" was neither very well nor very happy. Her hereditary disease developed itself; gradually, but in a manner alarming to those who loved her. She was very delicate, and suffered so much from the weakness of her chest, that she was obliged to relinquish singing. This was really the only tie between her and the Marchioness, who, without being a petty tyrant, treated her often with unfeeling haughtiness. She was, therefore, now rarely seen in the chambers of the great. In her own apartments she found, indeed, some distraction in music, for which she had a natural predisposition, but this was a pursuit that only fed the morbid passion of her tender soul. Alone, listening only to sweet sounds, or indulging in soft dreams that never could be realised, her existence glided away like a vision, and she seemed to become every day more fair and fragile. Alas! hers was the sad and mystic destiny to love one whom she never met, and by whom, if she met him, she would scarcely, perhaps, be recognised. Yet in that passion, fanciful, almost ideal, her life was absorbed, nor for her did the world contain an existence, a thought, a sensation, beyond those that sprang from the image of the noble youth who had sympathised with her in her sorrows, and had softened the hard fortunes of dependence by his generous sensibility. Happy that, with many mortifications, it was still her lot to live under the roof of one who bore his name, and in whose veins flowed the same blood! She felt indeed for the Marquess, whom she so rarely saw, and from whom she had never received much notice, prompted, it would seem, by her fantastic passion, a degree of reverence, almost of affection, which seemed occasionally, even to herself, as something inexplicable and without reason.

As for her fond step-father, M. Villebecque, the world fared very differently with him. His lively and enterprising genius, his ready and multiform talents, and his temper which defied disturbance, had made their way. He had become the very right hand of Lord Monmouth; his only counsellor, his only confidant; his secret agent; the minister of his will. And well did Villebecque deserve this trust, and ably did he maintain himself in the difficult position which he achieved. There was nothing which Ville-

becque did not know, nothing which he could not do, especially at Paris. He was master of his subject; in all things the secret of success, and without which, however they may from accident dazzle the world, the statesman, the orator, the author, all alike feel the damning consciousness of being charlatans.

Coningsby had made a visit to M. Villebecque and Flora the day after his arrival. It was a recollection and a courtesy that evidently greatly gratified them. Villebecque talked very much and amusingly; and Flora, whom Coningsby frequently addressed, very little, though she listened with great earnestness. Coningsby told her that he thought, from all he heard, she was too much alone, and counselled her to gaiety. But nature, that had made her mild, had denied her that constitutional liveliness of being which is the graceful property of French women. She was a lily of the valley, that loved seclusion and the tranquillity of virgin glades. Almost every day, as he passed their *entresol*, Coningsby would look into Villebecque's apartments for a moment, to ask after Flora.

CHAPTER II.

Sidonia was to dine at Lord Monmouth's the day after he met Lucretia, and afterwards they were all to meet at a ball much talked of, and to which invitations were much sought; and which was to be given that evening by the Baroness S. de R——d.

Lord Monmouth's dinners at Paris were celebrated. It was generally agreed that they had no rivals; yet there were others who had as skilful cooks, others who, for such a purpose, were equally profuse in their expenditure. What, then, was the secret spell of his success? The simplest in the world, though no one seemed aware of it. His Lordship's plates were always hot: whereas at Paris, in the best appointed houses, and at dinners which, for costly materials and admirable art in their preparation, cannot be surpassed, the effect is always considerably lessened, and by a mode the most mortifying—by the mere circumstance that every one at a French dinner is served on a cold plate. The reason of a custom, or rather a necessity, which one would think a nation so celebrated for their gastronomical taste would recoil from, is really, it is believed, that the ordinary French porcelain is so very inferior, that it cannot endure the preparatory heat for dinner. The common white pottery, for example, which is in general use, and always found at the cafés, will not bear vicinage to a brisk kitchen fire for half-an-hour. Now, if we only had that treaty of commerce with France which has been so often on the point of completion, the fabrics of our unrivalled potteries, in exchange for

their capital wines, would be found throughout France. The dinners of both nations would be improved: the English would gain a delightful beverage, and the French, for the first time in their lives, would dine off hot plates. An unanswerable instance of the advantages of commercial reciprocity!

The guests at Lord Monmouth's to-day were chiefly Carlists, individuals bearing illustrious names, that animate the page of history, and are indissolubly bound up with the glorious annals of their great country. They are the phantoms of a past, but real Aristocracy; an Aristocracy that was founded on an intelligible principle; which claimed great privileges for great purposes; whose hereditary duties were such, that their possessors were perpetually in the eye of the nation, and who maintained, and, in a certain point of view, justified, their pre-eminence by constant illustration.

It pleased Lord Monmouth to show great courtesies to a fallen race with whom he sympathised; whose fathers had been his friends in the days of his hot youth; whose mothers he had made love to; whose palaces had been his home; whose brilliant fêtes he remembered; whose fanciful splendour excited his early imagination; and whose magnificent and wanton luxury had developed his own predisposition for boundless enjoyment. Soubise and his suppers; his cutlets and his mistresses; the profuse and embarrassed De Lauragais, who sighed for "entire ruin," as for a strange luxury, which perpetually eluded his grasp; these were the heroes of the olden time that Lord Monmouth worshipped; the wisdom of our ancestors which he appreciated; and he turned to their recollection for relief from the vulgar prudence of the degenerate days on which he had fallen: days when nobles must be richer than other men, or they cease to have any distinction.

It was impossible not to be struck by the effective appearance of Lady Monmouth as she received her guests in grand toilet preparatory to the ball; white satin and miniver, a brilliant tiara. Her fine form, her costume of a fashion as perfect as its materials were sumptuous, and her presence always commanding and distinguished, produced a general effect to which few could be insensible. It was the triumph of mien over mere beauty of countenance.

The hotel of Madame S. de R——d is not more distinguished by its profuse decoration, than by the fine taste which has guided the vast expenditure. Its halls of arabesque are almost without a rival; there is not the slightest embellishment in which the hand and feeling of art are not recognised. The rooms were very crowded; everybody distinguished in Paris was there: the lady of the Court, the duchess of the Faubourg, the wife of the rich financier, the constitutional Throne, the old Monarchy, the modern

Bourse, were alike represented. Marshals of the Empire, Ministers of the Crown, Dukes and Marquesses, whose ancestors lounged in the Œil de Bœuf; diplomatists of all countries, eminent foreigners of all nations, deputies who led sections, members of learned and scientific academies, occasionally a stray poet; a sea of sparkling tiaras, brilliant bouquets, glittering stars, and glowing ribbons, many beautiful faces, many famous ones: unquestionably the general air of a first-rate Parisian saloon, on a great occasion, is not easily equalled. In London there is not the variety of guests; nor the same size and splendour of saloons. Our houses are too small for reception.

Coningsby, who had stolen away from his grandfather's before the rest of the guests, was delighted with the novelty of the splendid scene. He had been in Paris long enough to make some acquaintances, and mostly with celebrated personages. In his long fruitless endeavour to enter the saloon in which they danced, he found himself hustled against the illustrious Baron von H——t, whom he had sat next to at dinner a few days before at Count M——6's.

"It is more difficult than cutting through the Isthmus of Panama, Baron," said Coningsby, alluding to a past conversation.

"Infinitely," replied M. de H., smiling; "for I would undertake to cut through the Isthmus, and I cannot engage that I shall enter this ball-room."

Time, however, brought Coningsby into that brilliant chamber. What a blaze of light and loveliness! How coquettish are the costumes! How vivid the flowers! To sounds of stirring melody, beautiful beings move with grace. Grace, indeed, is beauty in action.

Here, where all are fair and everything is attractive, his eye suddenly arrested by one object—a form of surpassing grace among the graceful, among the beauteous a countenance of unrivalled beauty.

She was young among the youthful; a face of sunshine amid all that artificial light; her head placed upon her finely-moulded shoulders with a queen-like grace; a coronet of white roses on her dark brown hair; her only ornament. It was the beauty of the picture-gallery.

The eye of Coningsby never quitted her. When the dance ceased, he had an opportunity of seeing her nearer. He met her walking with her cavalier, and he was conscious that she observed him. Finally, he remarked that she resumed a seat next to the lady whom he had mistaken for her mother, but had afterwards understood to be Lady Wallinger.

Coningsby returned to the other saloons; he witnessed the en-

trance and reception of Lady Monmouth, who moved on towards the ball-room. Soon after this, Sidonia arrived; he came in with the still handsome and ever courteous Duke D——s. Observing Coningsby, he stopped to present him to the Duke. While thus conversing, the Duke, who is very fond of the English, observed, "See, here is your beautiful countrywoman that all the world are talking of. That is her uncle. He brings to me letters from one of your lords, whose name I cannot recollect."

And Sir Joseph and his lovely niece veritably approached. The Duke addressed them: asked them in the name of his Duchess to a concert on the next Thursday; and, after a thousand compliments, moved on. Sidonia stopped; Coningsby could not refrain from lingering, but stood a little apart, and was about to move away, when there was a whisper, of which, without hearing a word, he could not resist the impression that he was the subject. He felt a little embarrassed, and was retiring, when he heard Sidonia reply to an inquiry of the lady, "The same," and then, turning to Coningsby, said aloud, "Coningsby, Miss Millbank says that you have forgotten her."

Coningsby started, advanced, coloured a little, could not conceal his surprise. The lady, too, though more prepared, was not without confusion, and for an instant looked down. Coningsby recalled at that moment the long dark eyelashes, and the beautiful, bashful countenance that had so charmed him at Millbank; but two years had otherwise effected a wonderful change in the sister of his school-day friend, and transformed the silent, embarrassed girl into a woman of surpassing beauty and of the most graceful and impressive mien.

"It is not surprising that Mr. Coningsby should not recollect my niece," said Sir Joseph, addressing Sidonia, and wishing to cover their mutual embarrassment; "but it is impossible for her or for any one connected with her, not to be anxious at all times to express to him our sense of what we all owe him."

Coningsby and Miss Millbank were now in full routine conversation, consisting of questions; how long she had been at Paris; when she had heard last from Millbank; how her father was; also, how was her brother. Sidonia made an observation to Sir Joseph on a passer-by, and then himself moved on; Coningsby accompanying his new friends, in a contrary direction, to the refreshment-room, to which they were proceeding.

"And you have passed a winter at Rome," said Coningsby. "How I envy you! I feel that I shall never be able to travel!"

"And why not?"

"Life has become so stirring, that there is ever some great cause that keeps one at home."

"Life, on the contrary, so swift, that all may see now that of which they once could only read."

"The gold and silver sides of the shield," said Coningsby, with a smile.

"And you, like a good knight, will maintain your own."

"No, I would follow yours."

"You have not heard lately from Oswald?"

"Oh, yes; I think there are no such faithful correspondents as we are; I only wish we could meet."

"You will soon; but he is such a devotee of Oxford; quite a monk; and you, too, Mr. Coningsby, are much occupied."

"Yes, and at the same time as Millbank. I was in hopes, when I once paid you a visit, I might have found your brother."

"But that was such a rapid visit," said Miss Millbank.

"I always remember it with delight," said Coningsby.

"You were willing to be pleased; but Millbank, notwithstanding Rome, commands my affections, and in spite of this surrounding splendour, I could have wished to have passed my Christmas in Lancashire."

"Mr. Millbank has lately purchased a very beautiful place in the county. I became acquainted with Hellingsley when staying at my grandfather's."

"Ah! I have never seen it; indeed, I was very much surprised that papa became its purchaser, because he never will live there; and Oswald, I am sure, could never be tempted to quit Millbank. You know what enthusiastic ideas he has of his order?"

"Like all his ideas, sound, and high, and pure. I always duly appreciated your brother's great abilities, and, what is far more important, his lofty mind. When I recollect our Eton days, I cannot understand how more than two years have passed away without our being together. I am sure the fault is mine. I might now have been at Oxford instead of Paris. And yet," added Coningsby, "that would have been a sad mistake, since I should not have had the happiness of being here."

"Oh, yes, that would have been a sad mistake," said Miss Millbank.

"Edith," said Sir Joseph, rejoining his niece, from whom he had been momentarily separated, "Edith, that is Monsieur Thiers."

In the meantime, Sidonia reached the ball-room, and sitting near the entrance was Lady Monmouth, who immediately addressed him. He was, as usual, intelligent and unimpassioned, and yet not without a delicate deference which is flattering to women, especially if not altogether unworthy of it. Sidonia always admired Lucretia, and preferred her society to that of most persons. But the lady was in error in supposing that she

had conquered or could vanquish his heart. Sidonia was one of those men, not so rare as may be supposed, who shrink, above all things, from an adventure of gallantry with a woman in a position. He had neither time nor temper for sentimental circumvolutions. He detested the diplomacy of passion: protocols, protracted negotiations, conferences, correspondence, treaties projected, ratified, violated. He had no genius for the tactics of intrigue; your reconnoiterings, and marchings, and counter-marchings, sappings and minings, assaults, sometimes surrenders, and sometimes repulses. All the solemn and studied hypocrisies were to him infinitely wearisome; and if the movements were not merely formal, they irritated him, distracted his feelings, disturbed the tenor of his mind, deranged his nervous system. Something of the old Oriental vein influenced him in his carriage towards women. He was oftener behind the scenes of the Opera House than in his box; he delighted, too, in the society of ἑταῖραι; Aspasia was his heroine. Obliged to appear much in what is esteemed pure society, he cultivated the acquaintance of clever women, because they interested him; but in such saloons his feminine acquaintances were merely psychological. No lady could accuse him of trifling with her feelings, however decided might be his predilection for her conversation. He yielded at once to an admirer; never trespassed by any chance into the domain of sentiment; never broke, by any accident or blunder, into the irregular paces of flirtation; was a man who notoriously would never diminish by marriage the purity of his race; and one who always maintained that passion and polished life were quite incompatible. He liked the drawing-room, and he liked the desert, but he would not consent that either should trench on their mutual privileges.

The Princess Lucretia had yielded herself to the spell of Sidonia's society at Coningsby Castle, when she knew that marriage was impossible. But she loved him; and with an Italian spirit. Now they met again, and she was the Marchioness of Monmouth, a very great lady, very much admired, and followed, and courted, and very powerful. It is our great moralist who tells us, in the immortal page, that an affair of gallantry with a great lady is more delightful than with ladies of a lower degree. In this he contradicts the good old ballad; but certain it is, that Dr. Johnson announced to Boswell, "Sir, in the case of a Countess the imagination is more excited."

But Sidonia was a man on whom the conventional superiorities of life produced as little effect as a flake falling on the glaciers of the high Alps. His comprehension of the world and human nature was too vast and complete; he understood too well the

relative value of things to appreciate anything but essential excellence; and that not too much. A charming woman was not more charming to him because she chanced to be an empress in a particular district of one of the smallest planets; a charming woman under any circumstances was not an unique animal. When Sidonia felt a disposition to be spell-bound, he used to review in his memory all the charming women of whom he had read in the books of all literatures, and whom he had known himself in every court and clime, and the result of his reflections ever was, that the charming woman in question was by no means the paragon, which some who had read, seen, and thought less, might be inclined to esteem her. There was, indeed, no subject on which Sidonia discoursed so felicitously as on woman, and none on which Lord Eskdale more frequently endeavoured to attract him. He would tell you Talmudical stories about our mother Eve and the Queen of Sheba, which would have astonished you. There was not a free lady of Greece, Leontium and Phryne, Lais, Danae, and Lamia, the Egyptian girl Thonis, respecting whom he could not tell you as many diverting tales as if they were ladies of Loretto; not a nook of Athenæus, not an obscure scholiast, not a passage in the Greek orator, that could throw light on these personages, which was not at his command. What stories he would tell you about Marc Antony and the actress Cytheris in their chariot drawn by tigers! What a character would he paint of that Flora who gave her gardens to the Roman people! It would draw tears to your eyes. No man was ever so learned in the female manners of the last centuries of polytheism as Sidonia. You would have supposed that he had devoted his studies peculiarly to that period, if you had not chanced to draw him to the Italian middle ages. And even these startling revelations were almost eclipsed by his anecdotes of the Court of Henry III. of France, with every character of which he was as familiar as with the brilliant groups that at this moment filled the saloons of Madame De R——d.

CHAPTER III.

The image of Edith Millbank was the last thought of Coningsby, as he sank into an agitated slumber. To him had hitherto in general been accorded the precious boon of dreamless sleep. Homer tells us these phantasmas come from Jove; they are rather the children of a distracted soul. Coningsby this night lived much in past years, varied by painful perplexities of the present, which he could neither subdue nor comprehend. The scene flitted

from Eton to the castle of his grandfather; and then he found himself among the pictures of the Rue de Tronchet, but their owner bore the features of the senior Millbank. A beautiful countenance that was alternately the face in the mysterious picture, and then that of Edith, haunted him under all circumstances. He woke little refreshed; restless, and yet sensible of some secret joy.

He woke to think of her of whom he had dreamed. The light had dawned on his soul. Coningsby loved.

Ah! what is that ambition that haunts our youth?—that thirst for power or that lust of fame that forces us from obscurity into the sunblaze of the world?—what are these sentiments so high, so vehement, so ennobling? They vanish, and in an instant, before the glance of a woman!

Coningsby had scarcely quitted her side the preceding eve. He hung upon the accents of that clear sweet voice, and sought, with tremulous fascination, the gleaming splendour of those soft dark eyes. And now he sat in his chamber, with his eyes fixed upon vacancy. All thoughts and feelings, pursuits, desires, life, merge in one absorbing sentiment.

It is impossible to exist without seeing her again, and instantly. He had requested and gained permission to call on Lady Wallinger; he would not lose a moment in availing himself of it. As early as was tolerably decorous, and before, in all probability, they could quit their hotel, Coningsby repaired to the Rue de Rivoli to pay his respects to his new friends.

As he walked along, he indulged in fanciful speculations which connected Edith and the mysterious portrait of his mother. He felt himself, as it were, near the fulfilment of some fate, and on the threshold of some critical discovery. He recalled the impatient, even alarmed, expressions of Rigby at Montem six years ago, when he proposed to invite young Millbank to his grandfather's dinner; the vindictive feud that existed between the two families, and for which political opinion, or even party passion, could not satisfactorily account; and he reasoned himself into a conviction, that the solution of many perplexities was at hand, and that all would be consummated to the satisfaction of every one, by his unexpected but inevitable agency.

Coningsby found Sir Joseph alone. The worthy Baronet was at any rate no participator in Mr. Millbank's vindictive feelings against Lord Monmouth. On the contrary, he had a very high respect for a Marquess, whatever might be his opinions, and no mean consideration for a Marquess' grandson. Sir Joseph had inherited a large fortune made by commerce, and had increased it by the same means. He was a middle-class Whig, had faith-

fully supported that party in his native town during the days they wandered in the wilderness, and had well earned his share of the milk and honey when they vanquished the promised land. In the spring-tide of Liberalism, when the world was not analytical of free opinions, and odious distinctions were not drawn between Finality men and progressive Reformers, Mr. Wallinger had been the popular leader of a powerful body of his fellow-citizens, who had returned him to the first Reformed Parliament, and where, in spite of many a menacing Registration, he had contrived to remain. He had never given a Radical vote without the permission of the Secretary of the Treasury, and was not afraid of giving an unpopular one to serve his friends. He was not like that distinguished Liberal, who, after dining with the late Whig Premier, expressed his gratification and his gratitude, by assuring his Lordship that he might count on his support on all popular questions.

"I want men who will support the government on all unpopular questions," replied the witty statesman.

Mr. Wallinger was one of these men. His high character and strong purse were always in the front rank in the hour of danger. His support in the House was limited to his votes; but in other places equally important, at a meeting at a political club, or in Downing Street, he could find his tongue, take what is called a "practical" view of a question, adopt what is called an "independent tone," reanimate confidence in ministers, check mutiny, and set a bright and bold example to the wavering. A man of his property, and high character, and sound views, so practical and so independent—this was evidently the block from which a Baronet should be cut, and in due time he figured Sir Joseph.

A Spanish gentleman, of very ample means, and of a very good Catalan family, flying during a political convulsion to England, arrived with his two daughters at Liverpool, and bore letters of introduction to the house of Wallinger. Some little time after this, by one of those stormy vicissitudes of political fortune, of late years not unusual in the Peninsula, he returned to his native country, and left his children, and the management of that portion of his fortune that he had succeeded in bringing with him, under the guardianship of the father of the present Sir Joseph. This gentleman was about again to become an exile, when he met with an untimely end in one of those terrible tumults of which Barcelona is the frequent scene.

The younger Wallinger was touched by the charms of one of his father's wards. Her beauty of a character to which he was unaccustomed, her accomplishments of society, and the refinement

of her manners, conspicuous in the circle in which he lived, captivated him; and though they had no heir, the union had been one of great felicity. Sir Joseph was proud of his wife; he secretly considered himself, though his "tone" was as liberal and independent as in old days, to be on the threshold of aristocracy, and was conscious that Lady Wallinger played her part not unworthily in the elevated circles in which they now frequently found themselves. Sir Joseph was fond of great people, and not averse to travel; because, bearing a title, and being a member of the British Parliament, and always moving with the appendages of wealth, servants, carriages, and couriers, and fortified with no lack of letters from the Foreign Office, he was everywhere acknowledged, and received, and treated as a personage; was invited to court-balls, dined with ambassadors, and found himself and his lady at every festival of distinction.

The elder Millbank had been Joseph Wallinger's youthful friend. Different as were their dispositions and the rate of their abilities, their political opinions were the same; and commerce habitually connected their interests. During a visit to Liverpool, Millbank had made the acquaintance of the sister of Lady Wallinger, and had been a successful suitor for her hand. This lady was the mother of Edith and of the schoolfellow of Coningsby. It was only within a very few years that she had died; she had scarcely lived long enough to complete the education of her daughter, to whom she was devoted, and on whom she lavished the many accomplishments that she possessed. Lady Wallinger having no children, and being very fond of her niece, had watched over Edith with infinite solicitude, and finally had persuaded Mr. Millbank, that it would be well that his daughter should accompany them in their somewhat extensive travels. It was not, therefore, only that nature had developed a beautiful woman out of a bashful girl since Coningsby's visit to Millbank; but really, every means and every opportunity that could contribute to render an individual capable of adorning the most accomplished circles of life, had naturally, and without effort, fallen to the fortunate lot of the manufacturer's daughter. Edith possessed an intelligence equal to those occasions. Without losing the native simplicity of her character, which sprang from the heart, and which the strong and original bent of her father's mind had fostered, she had imbibed all the refinement and facility of the polished circles in which she moved. She had a clear head, a fine taste, and a generous spirit; had received so much admiration, that, though by no means insensible to homage, her heart was free; was strongly attached to her family; and, notwith-

standing all the splendour of Rome, and the brilliancy of Paris, her thoughts were often in her Saxon valley, amid the green hills and busy factories of Millbank.

Sir Joseph, finding himself alone with the grandson of Lord Monmouth, was not very anxious that the ladies should immediately appear. He thought this a very good opportunity of getting at what are called "the real feelings of the Tory party;" and he began to pump with a seductive semblance of frankness. For his part, he had never doubted that a Conservative government was ultimately inevitable; had told Lord John so two years ago, and, between themselves, Lord John was of the same opinion. The present position of the Whigs was the necessary fate of all progressive parties; could not see exactly how it would end; thought sometimes it must end in a fusion of parties; but could not well see how that could be brought about, at least, at present. For his part, should be very happy to witness an union of the best men of all parties, for the preservation of peace and order, without any reference to any particular opinions. And, in that sense of the word, it was not at all impossible he might find it his duty some day to support a Conservative government.

Sir Joseph was very much astonished when Coningsby, who being somewhat impatient for the entrance of the ladies was rather more abrupt than his wont, told the worthy Baronet that he looked upon a government without distinct principles of policy as only a stop-gap to a wide-spread and demoralising anarchy; that he for one could not comprehend how a free government could endure without national opinions to uphold it; and that governments for the preservation of peace and order, and nothing else, had better be sought in China, or among the Austrians, the Chinese of Europe. As for Conservative government, the natural question was, What do you mean to conserve? Do you mean to conserve things or only names, realities or merely appearances? Or, do you mean to continue the system commenced in 1834, and, with a hypocritical reverence for the principles, and a superstitious adhesion to the forms, of the old exclusive constitution, carry on your policy by latitudinarian practice?

Sir Joseph stared; it was the first time that any inkling of the views of the New Generation had caught his ear. They were strange and unaccustomed accents. He was extremely perplexed; could by no means make out what his companion was driving at; at length, with a rather knowing smile, expressive as much of compassion as comprehension, he remarked,—

"Ah! I see; you are a regular Orangeman."

"I look upon an Orangeman," said Coningsby, "as a pure

Whig; the only professor and practiser of unadulterated Whiggism."

This was too much for Sir Joseph, whose political knowledge did not reach much further back than the ministry of the Mediocrities; hardly touched the times of the Corresponding Society. But he was a cautious man, and never replied in haste. He was about feeling his way, when he experienced the golden advantage of gaining time, for the ladies entered.

The heart of Coningsby throbbed as Edith appeared. She extended to him her hand; her face radiant with kind expression. Lady Wallinger seemed gratified also by his visit. She had much elegance in her manner; a calm, soft address; and she spoke English with a sweet Doric irregularity. They all sat down, talked of the last night's ball, of a thousand things. There was something animating in the frank, cheerful spirit of Edith. She had a quick eye both for the beautiful and the ridiculous, and threw out her observations in terse and vivid phrases. An hour, and more than an hour, passed away, and Coningsby still found some excuse not to depart. It seemed that on this morning they were about to make an expedition into the antique city of Paris, to visit some old hotels which retained their character; especially they had heard much of the hotel of the Archbishop of Sens, with its fortified court-yard. Coningsby expressed great interest in the subject, and showed some knowledge. Sir Joseph invited him to join the party, which of all things in the world was what he most desired.

CHAPTER IV.

Not a day elapsed without Coningsby being in the company of Edith. Time was precious for him, for the spires and pinnacles of Cambridge already began to loom in the distance, and he resolved to make the most determined efforts not to lose a day of his liberty. And yet to call every morning in the Rue de Rivoli was an exploit which surpassed even the audacity of love! More than once, making the attempt, his courage failed him, and he turned into the gardens of the Tuileries, and only watched the windows of the house. Circumstances, however, favoured him: he received a letter from Oswald Millbank; he was bound to communicate in person this evidence of his friend's existence; and when he had to reply to the letter, he must necessarily inquire whether his friend's relatives had any message to transmit to him. These, however, were only slight advantages. What assisted

Coningsby in his plans and wishes was the great pleasure which Sidonia, with whom he passed a great deal of his time, took in the society of the Wallingers and their niece. Sidonia presented Lady Wallinger with his opera-box during her stay at Paris; invited them very frequently to his agreeable dinner-parties; and announced his determination to give a ball, which Lady Wallinger esteemed a delicate attention to Edith; while Lady Monmouth flattered herself that the festival sprang from the desire she had expressed of seeing the celebrated hotel of Sidonia to advantage.

Coningsby was very happy. His morning visits to the Rue de Rivoli seemed always welcome, and seldom an evening elapsed in which he did not find himself in the society of Edith. She seemed not to wish to conceal that his presence gave her pleasure, and though she had many admirers, and had an airy graciousness for all of them, Coningsby sometimes indulged the exquisite suspicion that there was a flattering distinction in her carriage to himself. Under the influence of these feelings, he began daily to be more conscious that separation would be an intolerable calamity; he began to meditate upon the feasibility of keeping a half term, and of postponing his departure to Cambridge, to a period nearer the time when Edith would probably return to England.

In the meanwhile, the Parisian world talked much of the grand fête which was about to be given by Sidonia. Coningsby heard much of it one day when dining at his grandfather's. Lady Monmouth seemed very intent on the occasion. Even Lord Monmouth half talked of going, though, for his part, he wished people would come to him, and never ask him to their houses. That was his idea of society. He liked the world, but he liked to find it under his own roof. He grudged them nothing, so that they would not insist upon the reciprocity of cold-catching, and would eat his good dinners instead of insisting on his eating their bad ones.

"But Monsieur Sidonia's cook is a gem, they say," observed an Attaché of an embassy.

"I have no doubt of it; Sidonia is a man of sense, almost the only man of sense I know. I never caught him tripping. He never makes a false move. Sidonia is exactly the sort of man I like; you know you cannot deceive him, and that he does not want to deceive you. I wish he liked a rubber more. Then he would be perfect."

"They say he is going to be married," said the Attaché.

"Poh!" said Lord Monmouth.

"Married!" exclaimed Lady Monmouth. "To whom?"

"To your beautiful countrywoman, 'la belle Anglaise' that all the world talks of," said the Attaché.

"And who may she be, pray?" said the Marquess. "I have so many beautiful countrywomen."

"Mademoiselle Millbank," said the Attaché.

"Millbank!" said the Marquess, with a lowering brow. "There are so many Millbanks. Do you know what Millbank this is, Harry?" he inquired of his grandson, who had listened to the conversation with a rather embarrassed, and even agitated spirit.

"What, sir—yes—Millbank?" said Coningsby.

"I say, do you know who this Millbank is?"

"Oh! Miss Millbank: yes, I believe, that is, I know a daughter of the—the gentleman who purchased some property near you."

"Oh! that fellow! Has he got a daughter here?"

"The most beautiful girl in Paris," said the Attaché.

"Lady Monmouth, have you seen this beauty?—that Sidonia is going to marry," he added, with a fiendish laugh.

"I have seen the young lady," said Lady Monmouth; "but I had not heard that Monsieur Sidonia was about to marry her."

"Is she so very beautiful?" inquired another gentleman.

"Yes," said Lady Monmouth, calm, but very pale.

"Poh!" said the Marquess again.

"I assure you that it is a fact," said the Attaché, "not at least an *on-dit*. I have it from a quarter that could not well be mistaken."

Behold a little snatch of ordinary dinner gossip that left a very painful impression on the minds of three individuals who were present.

The name of Millbank revived in Lord Monmouth's mind a sense of defeat, discomfiture, and disgust; Hellingsley, lost elections, and Mr. Rigby; three subjects which Lord Monmouth had succeeded for a time in expelling from his sensations. His Lordship thought that, in all probability, this beauty of whom they spoke so highly was not really the daughter of his foe; that it was some confusion which had arisen from the similarity of names: nor did he believe that Sidonia was going to marry her, whoever she might be; but a variety of things had been said at dinner, and a number of images had been raised in his mind that touched his spleen. He took his wine freely, and, the usual consequence of that proceeding with Lord Monmouth, became silent and sullen. As for Lady Monmouth, she had learnt that Sidonia, whatever might be the result, was paying very marked attention to another woman, for whom undoubtedly he was giving that very ball which she had flattered herself was a homage to her wishes, and for which she had projected a new dress of eclipsing splendour.

Coningsby felt quite sure that the story of Sidonia's marriage with

Edith was the most ridiculous idea that ever entered into the imagination of man; at least he thought he felt quite sure. But the idlest and wildest report that the woman you love is about to marry another is not comfortable. Besides, he could not conceal from himself that, between the Wallingers and Sidonia there existed a remarkable intimacy, fully extended to their niece. He had seen her certainly on more than one occasion in lengthened and apparently earnest conversation with Sidonia, who, by the bye, spoke with her often in Spanish, and never concealed his admiration of her charms nor the interest he found in her society. And Edith—what, after all, had passed between Edith and himself which should at all gainsay this report, which he had been particularly assured was not a mere report, but came from a quarter that could not well be mistaken? She had received him with kindness. And how should she receive one who was the friend and preserver of her only brother, and apparently the intimate and cherished acquaintance of her future husband? Coningsby felt that sickness of the heart that accompanies one's first misfortune. The illusions of life seemed to dissipate and disappear. He was miserable; he had no confidence in himself, in his future. After all, what was he? A dependent on a man of very absolute will and passions. Could he forget the glance with which Lord Monmouth caught the name of Millbank, and received the intimation of Hellingsley? It was a glance for a Spagnoletto or a Caravaggio to catch and immortalise. Why, if Edith were not going to marry Sidonia, how was he ever to marry her, even if she cared for him? Oh! what a future of unbroken, continuous, interminable misery awaited him! Was there ever yet born a being with a destiny so dark and dismal? He was the most forlorn of men, utterly wretched! He had entirely mistaken his own character. He had no energy, no abilities, not a single eminent quality. All was over!

CHAPTER V.

It was fated that Lady Monmouth should not be present at that ball, the anticipation of which had occasioned her so much pleasure and some pangs.

On the morning after that slight conversation, which had so disturbed the souls, though unconsciously to each other, of herself and Coningsby, the Marquess was driving Lucretia up the avenue Marigny in his phaeton. About the centre of the avenue the horses took fright, and started off at a wild pace. The Marquess was an experienced whip, calm, and with exertion still very powerful. He would have soon mastered the horses, had not one

of the reins unhappily broken. The horses swerved; the Marquess kept his seat; Lucretia, alarmed, sprang up, the carriage was dashed against the trunk of a tree, and she was thrown out of it, at the very instant that one of the outriders had succeeded in heading the equipage and checking the horses.

The Marchioness was senseless. Lord Monmouth had descended from the phaeton; several passengers had assembled; the door of a contiguous house was opened; there were offers of service, sympathy, inquiries, a babble of tongues, great confusion.

"Get surgeons and send for her maid," said Lord Monmouth to one of his servants.

In the midst of this distressing tumult, Sidonia, on horseback, followed by a groom, came up the avenue from the Champs Elysées. The empty phaeton, reins broken, horses held by strangers, all the appearances of a misadventure, attracted him. He recognised the livery. He instantly dismounted. Moving aside the crowd, he perceived Lady Monmouth senseless and prostrate, and her husband, without assistance, restraining the injudicious efforts of the bystanders.

"Let us carry her in, Lord Monmouth," said Sidonia, exchanging a recognition as he took Lucretia in his arms, and bore her into the dwelling that was at hand. Those who were standing at the door assisted him. The woman of the house and Lord Monmouth only were present.

"I would hope there is no fracture," said Sidonia, placing her on a sofa, "nor does it appear to me that the percussion of the head, though considerable, could have been fatally violent. I have caught her pulse. Keep her in a horizontal position, and she will soon come to herself."

The Marquess seated himself in a chair by the side of the sofa which Sidonia had advanced to the middle of the room. Lord Monmouth was silent and very serious. Sidonia opened the window, and touched the brow of Lucretia with water. At this moment M. Villebecque and a surgeon entered the chamber.

"The brain cannot be affected, with that pulse," said the surgeon; "there is no fracture."

"How pale she is!" said Lord Monmouth, as if he were examining a picture.

"The colour seems to me to return," said Sidonia.

The surgeon applied some restoratives which he had brought with him. The face of the Marchioness showed signs of life; she stirred.

"She revives," said the surgeon.

The Marchioness breathed with some force; again; then half-opened her eyes, and then instantly closed them.

"If I could but get her to take this draught," said the surgeon.

"Stop!—moisten her lips first," said Sidonia.

They placed the draught to her mouth; in a moment she put forth her hand as if to repress them, then opened her eyes again, and sighed.

"She is herself," said the surgeon.

"Lucretia!" said the Marquess.

"Sidonia!" said the Marchioness.

Lord Monmouth looked round to invite his friend to come forward.

"Lady Monmouth!" said Sidonia, in a gentle voice.

She started, rose a little on the sofa, stared around her. "Where am I?" she exclaimed.

"With me," said the Marquess; and he bent forward to her, and took her hand.

"Sidonia!" she again exclaimed, in a voice of inquiry.

"Is here," said Lord Monmouth. "He carried you in after our accident."

"Accident! Why is he going to marry?"

The Marquess took a pinch of snuff.

There was an awkward pause in the chamber.

"I think now," said Sidonia to the surgeon, "that Lady Monmouth would take the draught."

She refused it.

"Try you, Sidonia," said the Marquess, rather drily.

"You feel yourself again?" said Sidonia, advancing.

"Would I did not!" said the Marchioness, with an air of stupor. "What has happened? Why am I here? Are you married?"

"She wanders a little," said Sidonia.

The Marquess took another pinch of snuff.

"I could have borne even repulsion," said Lady Monmouth, in a voice of desolation, "but not for another!"

"M. Villebecque!" said the Marquess.

"My Lord?"

Lord Monmouth looked at him with that irresistible scrutiny which would daunt a galley-slave; and then, after a short pause, said, "The carriage should have arrived by this time. Let us get home."

CHAPTER VI.

After the conversation at dinner which we have noticed, the restless and disquieted Coningsby wandered about Paris, vainly seeking in the distraction of a great city some relief from the

excitement of his mind. His first resolution was immediately to depart for England; but when, on reflection, he was mindful that, after all, the assertion which had so agitated him might really be without foundation, in spite of many circumstances that to his regardful fancy seemed to accredit it, his firm resolution began to waver.

These were the first pangs of jealousy that Coningsby had ever experienced, and they revealed to him the immensity of the stake which he was hazarding on a most uncertain die.

The next morning he called in the Rue Rivoli, and was informed that the family were not at home. He was returning under the arcades, towards the Rue St. Florentin, when Sidonia passed him in an opposite direction on horseback, and at a rapid rate. Coningsby, who was not observed by him, could not resist a strange temptation to watch for a moment his progress. He saw him enter the court of the Hotel where the Wallinger family were staying. Would he come forth immediately? No. Coningsby stood still and pale. Minute followed minute. Coningsby flattered himself that Sidonia was only speaking to the porter. Then he would fain believe Sidonia was writing a note. Then crossing the street, he mounted by some steps the Terrace of the Tuileries, nearly opposite the Hotel of the Minister of Finance, and watched the house. A quarter of an hour elapsed; Sidonia did not come forth. They were at home to him; only to him. Sick at heart, infinitely wretched, scarcely able to guide his steps, dreading even to meet an acquaintance, and almost feeling that his tongue would refuse the office of conversation, he contrived to reach his grandfather's hotel, and was about to bury himself in his chamber, when on the staircase he met Flora.

Coningsby had not seen her for the last fortnight. Seeing her now, his heart smote him for his neglect, excusable as it really was. Any one else at this time, he would have hurried by without recognition, but the gentle and suffering Flora was too meek to be rudely treated by so kind a heart as Coningsby's.

He looked at her; she was pale and agitated. Her step trembled, while she still hastened on.

"What is the matter?" inquired Coningsby.

"My Lord,—the Marchioness,—are in danger, thrown from their carriage." Briefly she detailed to Coningsby all that had occurred; that M. Villebecque had already repaired to them; that she herself only this moment had learned the intelligence that seemed to agitate her to the centre. Coningsby instantly turned with her; but they had scarcely emerged from the court-yard when the carriage approached that brought Lord and Lady

Monmouth home. They followed it into the court. They were immediately at its door.

"All is right, Harry," said the Marquess, calm and grave.

Coningsby pressed his grandfather's hand. Then he assisted Lucretia to alight.

"I am quite well," she said, "now."

"But you must lean on me, dearest Lady Monmouth," Coningsby said in a tone of great tenderness, as he felt Lucretia almost sinking from him. And he supported her into the hall of the hotel.

Lord Monmouth had lingered behind. Flora crept up to him, and with unwonted boldness offered her arm to the Marquess. He looked at her with a glance of surprise, and then a softer expression, one indeed of an almost winning sweetness, which, though rare, was not a stranger to his countenance, melted his features, and taking the arm so humbly presented, he said,—

"Ma Petite, you look more frightened than any of us. Poor child!"

He had reached the top of the flight of steps; he withdrew his arm from Flora, and thanked her with all his courtesy.

"You are not hurt, then, sir?" she ventured to ask with a look that expressed the infinite solicitude which her tongue did not venture to convey.

"By no means, my good little girl;" and he extended his hand to her, which she reverently bent over and embraced.

CHAPTER VII.

When Coningsby had returned to his grandfather's hotel that morning, it was with a determination to leave Paris the next day for England, but the accident to Lady Monmouth, though, as it ultimately appeared, accompanied by no very serious consequences, quite dissipated this intention. It was impossible to quit them so crudely at such a moment. So he remained another day, and that was the day preceding Sidonia's fête, which he particularly resolved not to attend. He felt it quite impossible that he could again endure the sight of either Sidonia or Edith. He looked upon them as persons who had deeply injured him; though they really were individuals who had treated him with invariable kindness. But he felt their existence was a source of mortification and misery to him. With these feelings, sauntering away the last hours at Paris, disquieted, uneasy; no present, no future; no enjoyment, no hope; really, positively, undeniably, unhappy;

unhappy too for the first time in his life; the first unhappiness—what a companion piece for the first love; Coningsby, of all places in the world, in the gardens of the Luxembourg, encountered Sir Joseph Wallinger and Edith.

To avoid them was impossible; they met face to face; and Sir Joseph stopped, and immediately reminded him that it was three days since they had seen him, as if to reproach him for so unprecedented a neglect. And it seemed that Edith, though she said not as much, felt the same. And Coningsby turned round and walked with them. He told them he was going to leave Paris on the morrow.

"And miss Monsieur de Sidonia's fête, of which we have all talked so much!" said Edith, with unaffected surprise, and an expression of disappointment which she in vain attempted to conceal.

"The festival will not be less gay for my absence," said Coningsby, with that plaintive moroseness not unusual to despairing lovers.

"If we were all to argue from the same premises, and act accordingly," said Edith, "the saloons would be empty. But if any person's absence would be remarked, I should really have thought it would be yours. I thought you were one of Monsieur de Sidonia's great friends?"

"He has no friends," said Coningsby. "No wise man has. What are friends? Traitors."

Edith looked very much astonished. And then she said,—

"I am sure you have not quarrelled with Monsieur de Sidonia, for we have just parted with him."

"I have no doubt you have," thought Coningsby.

"And it is impossible to speak of another in higher terms than he spoke of you. Sir Joseph observed how unusual it was for Monsieur de Sidonia to express himself so warmly."

"Sidonia is a great man, and carries everything before him," said Coningsby. "I am nothing; I cannot cope with him; I retire from the field."

"What field?" inquired Sir Joseph, who did not clearly catch the drift of these observations. "It appears to me that a field for action is exactly what Sidonia wants. There is no vent for his abilities and intelligence. He wastes his energy in travelling from capital to capital like a King's messenger. The morning after his fête he is going to Madrid."

This brought some reference to their mutual movements. Edith spoke of her return to Lancashire, of her hope that Mr. Coningsby would soon see Oswald; but Mr. Coningsby informed her that though he was going to leave Paris, he had no intention of re-

turning to England; that he had not yet quite made up his mind whither he should go; but thought that he should travel direct to St. Petersburg. He wished to travel overland to Astrachan. That was the place he was particularly anxious to visit.

After this incomprehensible announcement, they walked on for some minutes in silence, broken only by occasional monosyllables with which Coningsby responded at hazard to the sound remarks of Sir Joseph. As they approached the Palace, a party of English who were visiting the Chamber of Peers, and who were acquainted with the companions of Coningsby, encountered them. Amid the mutual recognitions, Coningsby was about to take his leave somewhat ceremoniously, but Edith held forth her hand, and said,—

"Is this indeed farewell?"

His heart was agitated, his countenance changed, he retained her hand amid the chattering tourists, too full of their criticisms and their egotistical common-places to notice what was passing. A sentimental ebullition seemed to be on the point of taking place. Their eyes met. The look of Edith was mournful and inquiring.

"We will say farewell at the ball," said Coningsby, and she rewarded him with a radiant smile.

CHAPTER VIII.

Sidonia lived in the Faubourg St. Germain, in a large hotel that, in old days, had belonged to the Crillons; but it had received at his hands such extensive alterations, that nothing of the original decoration, and little of its arrangement, remained.

A flight of marble steps, ascending from a vast court, led into a hall of great dimensions, which was at the same time an orangery and a gallery of sculpture. It was illumined by a distinct, yet soft and subdued, light, which harmonized with the beautiful repose of the surrounding forms, and with the exotic perfume that was wafted about. A gallery led from this hall to an inner hall of quite a different character; fantastic, glittering, variegated; full of strange shapes and dazzling objects.

The roof was carved and gilt in that honey-comb style prevalent in the Saracenic buildings; the walls were hung with leather stamped in rich and vivid patterns; the floor was a flood of mosaic; about were statues of negroes of human size with faces of wild expression, and holding in their outstretched hands silver torches that blazed with an almost painful brilliancy.

From this inner hall, a double staircase of white marble led to the grand suite of apartments.

These saloons, lofty, spacious, and numerous, had been decorated principally in encaustic by the most celebrated artists of Munich. The three principal rooms were only separated from each other by columns, covered with rich hangings, on this night drawn aside. The decoration of each chamber was appropriate to its purpose. On the walls of the ball-room, nymphs and heroes moved in measure in Sicilian landscapes, or on the azure shores of Ægean waters. From the ceiling beautiful divinities threw garlands on the guests, who seemed surprised that the roses, unwilling to quit Olympus, would not descend on earth The general effect of this fair chamber was heightened too by that regulation of the house which did not permit any benches in the ball-room. That dignified assemblage who are always found ranged in precise discipline against the wall, did not here mar the flowing grace of the festivity. The chaperons had no cause to complain. A large saloon abounded in ottomans and easy chairs at their service, where their delicate charges might rest when weary, or find distraction when not engaged.

All the world were at this fête of Sidonia. It exceeded in splendour and luxury every entertainment that had yet been given. The highest rank, even Princes of the blood, beauty, fashion, fame —all assembled in a magnificent and illuminated palace, resounding with exquisite melody.

Coningsby, though somewhat depressed, was not insensible to the magic of the scene. Since the passage in the gardens of the Luxembourg—that tone—that glance—he had certainly felt much relieved, happier. And yet if all were, with regard to Sidonia, as unfounded as he could possibly desire, where was he then? Had he forgotten his grandfather—that fell look, that voice of intense detestation? What was Millbank to him? Where, what was the mystery, for of some he could not doubt. The Spanish parentage of Edith had only more perplexed Coningsby. It offered no solution. There could be no connection between a Catalan family and his mother, the daughter of a clergyman in a midland county. That there was any relationship between the Millbank family and his mother was contradicted by the conviction in which he had been brought up that his mother had no relations; that she returned to England utterly friendless; without a relative, a connection, an acquaintance to whom she could appeal. Her complete forlornness was stamped upon his brain. Tender as were his years when he was separated from her, he could yet recall the very phrases in which she deplored her isolation; and there were numerous passages in her letters which alluded to it. Coningsby

had taken occasion to sound the Wallingers on this subject; but he felt assured, from the manner in which his advances were met, that they knew nothing of his mother, and attributed the hostility of Mr. Millbank to his grandfather, solely to political emulation and local rivalries. Still there were the portrait and the miniature. That was a fact; a clue which ultimately, he was persuaded, must lead to some solution.

Coningsby had met with great social success at Paris. He was at once a favourite. The Parisian dames decided in his favour. He was a specimen of the highest style of English beauty, which is very popular in France. His air was acknowledged as distinguished. The men also liked him; he had not quite arrived at that age when you make enemies. The moment, therefore, that he found himself in the saloons of Sidonia, he was accosted by many whose notice was flattering; but his eye wandered, while he tried to be courteous, and attempted to be sprightly. Where was she? He had nearly reached the ball-room when he met her. She was on the arm of Lord Beaumanoir, who had made her acquaintance at Rome, and originally claimed it as the member of a family who, as the reader may perhaps not forget, had experienced some kindnesses from the Millbanks.

There were mutual and hearty recognitions between the young men; great explanations where they had been, what they were doing, where they going. Lord Beaumanoir told Coningsby he had introduced steeple-chases at Rome, and had parted with Sunbeam to the nephew of a Cardinal. Coningsby securing Edith's hand for the next dance, they all moved on together to her aunt.

Lady Wallinger was indulging in some Roman reminiscences with the Marquess.

"And you are not going to Astrachan to-morrow?" said Edith.

"Not to-morrow," said Coningsby.

"You know that you said once that life was too stirring in these days to permit travel to a man?"

"I wish nothing was stirring," said Coningsby. "I wish nothing to change. All that I wish is, that this fête should never end."

"Is it possible that you can be capricious? You perplex me very much."

"Am I capricious because I dislike change?"

"But Astrachan?"

"It was the air of the Luxembourg that reminded me of the Desert," said Coningsby.

Soon after this Coningsby led Edith to the dance. It was at a ball that he had first met her at Paris, and this led to other remi-

niscences; all most interesting. Coningsby was perfectly happy. All mysteries, all difficulties, were driven from his recollection; he lived only in the exciting and enjoyable present. Twenty-one and in love!

Some time after this, Coningsby, who was inevitably separated from Edith, met his host.

"Where have you been, child," said Sidonia, "that I have not seen you for some days? I am going to Madrid to-morrow."

"And I must think, I suppose, of Cambridge."

"Well, you have seen something; you will find it more profitable when you have digested it; and you will have opportunity. That's the true spring of wisdom: meditate over the past. Adventure and Contemplation share our being like day and night."

The resolute departure for England on the morrow had already changed into a supposed necessity of thinking of returning to Cambridge. In fact, Coningsby felt that to quit Paris and Edith was an impossibility. He silenced the remonstrance of his conscience by the expedient of keeping a half-term; and had no difficulty in persuading himself that a short delay in taking his degree could not really be of the slightest consequence.

It was the hour for supper. The guests at a French ball are not seen to advantage at this period. The custom of separating the sexes for this refreshment, and arranging that the ladies should partake of it by themselves, though originally founded in a feeling of consideration and gallantry, and with the determination to secure, under all circumstances, the convenience and comfort of the fair sex, is really, in its appearance and its consequences, anything but European, and produces a scene which rather reminds one of the harem of a sultan than a hall of chivalry. To judge from the countenances of the favoured fair, they are not themselves particularly pleased; and when their repast is over, they necessarily return to empty halls, and are deprived of the dance at the very moment when they may feel most inclined to participate in its graceful excitement.

These somewhat ungracious circumstances, however, were not attendant on the festival of this night. There was opened in the Hotel of Sidonia for the first time a banqueting-room which could contain with convenience all the guests. It was a vast chamber of white marble, the golden panels of the walls containing festive sculptures by Schwanthaler, relieved by encaustic tinting. In its centre was a fountain, a group of Bacchantes encircling Dionysos; and from this fountain, as from a star, diverged the various tables from which sprang orange-trees in fruit and flower.

The banquet had but one fault; Coningsby was separated from Edith. The Duchess of Grand Cairo, the beautiful wife of the heir of one of the Imperial illustrations, had determined to appropriate Coningsby as her cavalier for the moment. Distracted, he made his escape; but his wandering eye could not find the object of its search: and he fell prisoner to the charming Princess De Petitpoix, a Carlist Chieftain, whose witty words avenged the cause of fallen dynasties and a cashiered nobility.

Behold a scene brilliant in fancy, magnificent in splendour! All the circumstances of his life at this moment were such as acted forcibly on the imagination of Coningsby. Separated from Edith, he had still the delight of seeing her, the paragon of that bright company, the consummate being whom he adored! And who had spoken to him in a voice sweeter than a serenade, and had bestowed on him a glance softer than moonlight! The lord of the palace, more distinguished even for his capacity than his boundless treasure, was his chosen friend; gained under circumstances of romantic interest, when the reciprocal influence of their personal qualities was affected by no accessory knowledge of their worldly positions. He himself was in the very bloom of youth and health; the child of a noble house, rich for his present wants, and with a future of considerable fortunes. Entrancing love and dazzling friendship, a high ambition and the pride of knowledge, the consciousness of a great prosperity, the vague, daring energies of the high pulse of twenty-one, all combined to stimulate his sense of existence, which, as he looked around him at the beautiful objects and listened to the delicious sounds, seemed to him a dispensation of almost supernatural ecstacy.

About an hour after this, the ball-room still full, but the other saloons gradually emptying, Coningsby entered a chamber which seemed deserted. Yet he heard sounds as it were of earnest conversation. It was a voice that invited his progress; he advanced another step, then suddenly stopped. There were two individuals in the room, by whom he was unnoticed. They were Sidonia and Miss Millbank. They were sitting on a sofa, Sidonia holding her hand and endeavouring, as it seemed, to sooth her. Her tones were tremulous; but the expression of her face was fond and confiding. It was all the work of a moment. Coningsby instantly withdrew, yet could not escape hearing an earnest request from Edith to her companion that he would write to her.

In a few seconds Coningsby had quitted the hotel of Sidonia, and the next day found him on his road to England.

END OF BOOK VI.

BOOK VII.

CHAPTER I.

It was one of those gorgeous and enduring sunsets that seem to linger as if they wished to celebrate the mid-period of the year. Perhaps the beautiful hour of impending twilight never exercises a more effective influence on the soul than when it descends on the aspect of some distant and splendid city. What a contrast between the serenity and repose of our own bosoms and the fierce passions and destructive cares girt in the walls of that multitude whose domes and towers rise in purple lustre against the resplendent horizon!

And yet the disturbing emotions of existence and the bitter inheritance of humanity should exercise but a modified sway, and entail but a light burden within the circle of the city into which the next scene of our history leads us. For it is the sacred city of study, of learning, and of faith; and the declining beam is resting on the dome of the Radcliffe, lingering on the towers of Christchurch and Magdalen, sanctifying the spires and pinnacles of holy St. Mary's.

A young Oxonian, who had for some time been watching the city in the sunset, from a rising ground in its vicinity, lost, as it would seem, in meditation, suddenly rose, and looking at his watch, as if remindful of some engagement, hastened his return at a rapid pace. He reached the High Street as the Blenheim light post coach dashed up to the Star Hotel, with that brilliant precision which even the new generation can remember, and yet which already ranks among the traditions of English manners. A peculiar and most animating spectacle used to be the arrival of a first-rate light coach in a country town! The small machine, crowded with so many passengers, the foaming and curvetting leaders, the wheelers more steady and glossy, as if they had not done their ten miles in the hour, the triumphant bugle of the guard, and the haughty routine with which the driver, as he reached his goal, threw his whip to the obedient ostlers in attendance; and, not least, the staring crowd, a little awe-struck, and looking for the moment at the lowest official of the stable with considerable respect, altogether made a picture which one recollects with cheerfulness, and misses now in many a dreary market-town.

Our Oxonian was a young man about the middle height, and naturally of a very thoughtful expression and rather reserved mien. The general character of his countenance was, indeed, a little stern, but it broke into an almost bewitching smile, and a blush suffused his face, as he sprang forward and welcomed an individual about the same age, who had jumped off the Blenheim.

"Well, Coningsby!" he exclaimed, extending both his hands.

"By Jove! my dear Millbank, we have met at last," said his friend.

And here we must for a moment revert to what had occurred to Coningsby since he so suddenly quitted Paris at the beginning of the year. The wound he had received was deep to one unused to wounds. Yet, after all, none had outraged his feelings, no one had betrayed his hopes. He had loved one who had loved another. Misery, but scarcely humiliation. And yet 'tis a bitter pang under any circumstances to find another preferred to yourself. It is about the same blow as one would probably feel if falling from a balloon. Your Icarian flight melts into a very grovelling existence, scarcely superior to that of a sponge or a coral, or redeemed only from utter insensibility by your very frank detestation of your rival. It is quite impossible to conceal that Coningsby had imbibed for Sidonia a certain degree of aversion, which, in these days of exaggerated phrase, might even be described as hatred. And Edith was so beautiful! And there had seemed between them a sympathy so native and spontaneous, creating at once the charm of intimacy without any of the disenchanting attributes that are occasionally its consequence. He would recal the tones of her voice, the expression of her soft dark eye, the airy spirit, and frank graciousness, sometimes even the flattering blush, with which she had ever welcomed one of whom she had heard so long and so kindly. It seemed, to use a sweet and homely phrase, that they were made for each other; the circumstances of their mutual destinies might have combined into one enchanting fate.

And yet, had she accorded him that peerless boon—her heart, with what aspect was he to communicate this consummation of all his hopes to his grandfather, ask Lord Monmouth for his blessing, and the gracious favour of an establishment for the daughter of his foe; of a man whose name was never mentioned except to cloud his visage. Ah! what was that mystery that connected the haughty house of Coningsby with the humble blood of the Lancashire manufacturer? Why was the portrait of his mother beneath the roof of Millbank? Coningsby had delicately touched upon the subject both with Edith and the Wallingers, but the result of his inquiries only involved the question in deeper gloom. Edith had none but maternal relatives: more than once she had mentioned

this, and the Wallingers, on other occasions, had confirmed the remark. Coningsby had sometimes drawn the conversation to pictures, and he would remind her with playfulness of their first unconscious meeting in the gallery of the Rue Tronchet; then he remembered that Mr. Millbank was fond of pictures; then he recollected some specimens of Mr. Millbank's collection, and after touching on several which could not excite suspicion, he came to "a portrait, a portrait of a lady; was it a portrait or an ideal countenance?"

Edith thought she had heard it was a portrait, but she was by no means certain; and most assuredly was quite unacquainted with the name of the original, if there were an original.

Coningsby addressed himself to the point with Sir Joseph. He inquired of the uncle explicitly whether he knew anything on the subject. Sir Joseph was of opinion that it was something that Millbank had somewhere "picked up." Millbank used often to "pick up" pictures.

Disappointed in his love, Coningsby sought refuge in the excitement of study, and in the brooding imagination of an aspiring spirit. The softness of his heart seemed to have quitted him for ever. He recurred to his habitual reveries of political greatness and public distinction. And as it ever seemed to him that no preparation could be complete for the career which he planned for himself, he devoted himself with increased ardour to that digestion of knowledge which converts it into wisdom. His life at Cambridge was now a life of seclusion. With the exception of a very few Eton friends he avoided all society. And, indeed, his acquisitions during this term were such as few have equalled, and could only have been mastered by a mental discipline of a severe and exalted character. At the end of the term Coningsby took his degree, and in a few days was about to quit that university where, on the whole, he had passed three serene and happy years in the society of fond and faithful friends, and in ennobling pursuits. He had many plans for his impending movements, yet none of them very mature ones. Lord Vere wished Coningsby to visit his family in the north, and afterwards to go to Scotland together; Coningsby was more inclined to travel for a year. Amid this hesitation a circumstance occurred which decided him to adopt neither of these courses.

It was Commencement, and coming out of the quadrangle of St. John's, Coningsby came suddenly upon Sir Joseph and Lady Wallinger, who were visiting the marvels and rarities of the university. They were alone. Coningsby was a little embarrassed, for he could not forget the abrupt manner in which he had parted from them; but they greeted him with so much cordiality that he instantly recovered himself, and, turning, became their companion.

He hardly ventured to ask after Edith: at length, in a depressed tone and a hesitating manner, he inquired whether they had lately seen Miss Millbank. He was himself surprised at the extreme light-heartedness which came over him the moment he heard she was in England, at Millbank, with her family. He always very much liked Lady Wallinger, but this morning he hung over her like a lover, lavished on her unceasing and the most delicate attentions, seemed to exist only in the idea of making the Wallingers enjoy and understand Cambridge; no one else was to be their guide at any place or under any circumstances. He told them exactly what they were to see; how they were to see it; when they were to see it. He told them of things which nobody did see, but which they should. He insisted that Sir Joseph should dine with him in hall. Sir Joseph could not think of leaving Lady Wallinger; Lady Wallinger could not think of Sir Joseph missing an opportunity that might never offer again. Besides they might both join her after dinner. Except to give her husband a dinner, Coningsby evidently intended never to leave her side.

And the next morning, the occasion favourable, being alone with the lady, Sir Joseph bustling about a carriage, Coningsby said suddenly, with a countenance a little disturbed, and in a low voice, "I was pleased, I mean surprised, to hear that there was still a Miss Millbank; I thought by this time she might have borne another name?"

Lady Wallinger looked at him with an expression of some perplexity, and then said, "Yes, Edith was very much admired; but she need not be precipitate in marrying. Marriage is for a woman *the* event. Edith is too precious to be carelessly bestowed."

"But I understood," said Coningsby, "when I left Paris," and here he became very confused, "that Miss Millbank was engaged—on the point of marriage."

"With whom?"

"Our friend Sidonia."

"I am sure that Edith would never marry Monsieur de Sidonia, nor Monsieur de Sidonia Edith. 'Tis a preposterous idea!" said Lady Wallinger.

"But he very much admired her?" said Coningsby with a searching eye.

"Possibly," said Lady Wallinger; "but he never even intimated his admiration."

"But he was very attentive to Miss Millbank?"

"Not more than our intimate friendship authorised, and might expect."

"You have known Sidonia a long time?"

"It was Monsieur de Sidonia's father who introduced us to the

care of Mr. Wallinger," said Lady Wallinger, "and therefore I have ever entertained for his son a most sincere regard. Besides I look upon him as a compatriot. Recently he has been even more than usually kind to us—especially to Edith. While we were at Paris he recovered for her a great number of jewels which had been left to her by her uncle in Spain; and, what she prized infinitely more, the whole of her mother's correspondence which she maintained with this relative since her marriage. Nothing but the influence of Sidonia could have effected this. Therefore, of course, Edith is attached to him almost as much as I am. In short, he is our dearest friend; our counsellor in all our cares. But as for marrying him, the idea is ridiculous to those who know Monsieur Sidonia. No earthly consideration would ever induce him to impair that purity of race on which he prides himself. Besides there are other obvious objections which would render an alliance between him and my niece utterly impossible: Edith is quite as devoted to her religion as Monsieur Sidonia can be to his race."

A ray of light flashed on the brain of Coningsby as Lady Wallinger said these words. The agitated interview, which never could be explained away, already appeared in quite a different point of view. He became pensive, remained silent, was relieved when Sir Joseph, whose return he had hitherto deprecated, reappeared. Coningsby learnt in the course of the day that the Wallingers were about to make, and immediately, a visit to Hellingsley; their first visit; indeed, this was the first year that Mr. Millbank had taken up his abode there. He did not much like the change of life, Sir Joseph told Coningsby, but Edith was delighted with Hellingsley, which Sir Joseph understood was a very distinguished place, with very fine gardens, of which his niece was particularly fond.

When Coningsby returned to his rooms—those rooms which he was soon about to quit for ever—in arranging some papers preparatory to his removal, his eye lighted on a too-long unanswered letter of Oswald Millbank. Coningsby had often projected a visit to Oxford, which he much desired to make, but hitherto it had been impossible for him to effect it, except in the absence of Millbank; and he had frequently postponed it that he might combine his first visit to that famous seat of learning with one to his old schoolfellow and friend. Now that was practical. And immediately Coningsby wrote to apprize Millbank that he had taken his degree, was free, and prepared to pay to him immediately the long-projected visit. Three years and more had elapsed since they had quitted Eton. How much had happened in the interval! What new ideas, new feelings, vast and novel knowledge! Though they

had not met, they were nevertheless familiar with the progress and improvement of each other's minds. Their suggestive correspondence was too valuable to both of them to have been otherwise than cherished. And now they were to meet on the eve of entering that world for which they had made so sedulous a preparation.

CHAPTER II.

THERE are few things in life more interesting than an unrestrained interchange of ideas with a congenial spirit, and there are few things more rare. How very seldom do you encounter in the world a man of great abilities, acquirements, experience, who will unmask his mind, unbutton his brains, and pour forth in careless and picturesque phrase all the results of his studies and observation; his knowledge of men, books, and nature. On the contrary, if a man has by any chance what he conceives an original idea, he hoards it as if it were old gold; and rather avoids the subject with which he is most conversant, from fear that you may appropriate his best thoughts. One of the principal causes of our renowned dullness in conversation is our extreme intellectual jealousy. It must be admitted that in this respect authors, but especially poets, bear the palm. They never think they are sufficiently appreciated, and live in tremor lest a brother should distinguish himself. Artists have the repute of being nearly as bad. And as for a small rising politician, a clever speech by a supposed rival or suspected candidate for office, destroys his appetite and disturbs his slumbers.

One of the chief delights and benefits of travel is, that one is perpetually meeting men of great abilities, of original mind, and rare acquirements, who will converse without reserve. In these discourses the intellect makes daring leaps and marvellous advances. The tone that colours our after-life is often caught in these chance colloquies, and the bent given that shapes a career.

And yet perhaps there is no occasion when the heart is more open, the brain more quick, the memory more rich and happy, or the tongue more prompt and eloquent, than when two school-day friends, knit by every sympathy of intelligence and affection, meet at the close of their college careers, after a long separation, hesitating, as it were, on the verge of active life, and compare together their conclusions of the interval; impart to each other all their thoughts and secret plans and projects; high fancies and

noble aspirations; glorious visions of personal fame and national regeneration.

Ah! why should such enthusiasm ever die! Life is too short to be little. Man is never so manly as when he feels deeply, acts boldly, and expresses himself with frankness and with fervour.

Most assuredly there never was a congress of friendship wherein more was said and felt than in this meeting, so long projected, and yet perhaps on the whole so happily procrastinated, between Coningsby and Millbank. In a moment they seemed as if they had never parted. Their faithful correspondence indeed had maintained the chain of sentiment unbroken. But details are only for conversation. Each poured forth his mind without stint. Not an author that had influenced their taste or judgment but was canvassed and criticised; not a theory they had framed or a principle they had adopted that was not confessed. Often, with boyish glee still lingering with their earnest purpose, they shouted as they discovered that they had formed the same opinion or adopted the same conclusion. They talked all day and late into the night. They condensed into a week the poignant conclusions of three years of almost unbroken study. And one night, as they sat together in Millbank's rooms at Oriel, their conversation having for some time taken a political colour, Millbank said—

"Now tell me, Coningsby, exactly what you conceive to be the state of parties in this country; for it seems to me that if we penetrate the surface the classification must be more simple than their many names would intimate."

"The principle of the exclusive constitution of England having been conceded by the acts of 1827-8-32," said Coningsby, "a party has arisen in the state who demand that the principle of political liberalism shall consequently be carried to its extent; which it appears to them is impossible without getting rid of the fragments of the old constitution that remain. This is the destructive party; a party with distinct and intelligible principles. They seek a specific for the evils of our social system in the general suffrage of the population.

"They are resisted by another party, who, having given up exclusion, would only embrace as much liberalism as is necessary for the moment; who, without any embarrassing promulgation of principles, wish to keep things as they find them as long as they can; and then will manage them as they find them as well as they can; but as a party must have the semblance of principles, they take the names of the things that they have destroyed. Thus they are devoted to the prerogatives of the Crown, although in truth

the Crown has been stripped of every one of its prerogatives; they affect a great veneration for the constitution in Church and State, though every one knows that the constitution in Church and State no longer exists; they are ready to stand or fall with the 'independence of the Upper House of Parliament,' though, in practice, they are perfectly aware that, with their sanction, 'the Upper House' has abdicated its initiatory functions, and now serves only as a court of review of the legislation of the House of Commons. Whenever public opinion, which this party never attempts to form, to educate, or to lead, falls into some violent perplexity, passion, or caprice, this party yields without a struggle to the impulse, and, when the storm has past, attempts to obstruct and obviate the logical and, ultimately, the inevitable results of the very measures they have themselves originated, or to which they have consented. This is the Conservative party.

"I care not whether men are called Whigs or Tories, Radicals or Chartists, or by what nickname a bustling and thoughtless race may designate themselves; but these two divisions comprehend at present the English nation.

"With regard to the first school, I for one have no faith in the remedial qualities of a government carried on by a neglected democracy, who, for three centuries, have received no education. What prospect does it offer us of those high principles of conduct with which we have fed our imaginations and strengthened our will? I perceive none of the elements of government that should secure the happiness of a people and the greatness of a realm.

"But in my opinion, if Democracy be combated only by Conservatism, Democracy must triumph, and at no distant date. This, then, is our position. The man who enters public life at this epoch has to choose between Political Infidelity and a Destructive Creed."

"This, then," said Millbank, "is the dilemma to which we are brought by nearly two centuries of Parliamentary Monarchy and Parliamentary Church?"

"'Tis true," said Coningsby. "We cannot conceal it from ourselves, that the first has made Government detested, and the second Religion disbelieved."

"Many men in this country," said Millbank, "and especially in the class to which I belong, are reconciled to the contemplation of democracy; because they have accustomed themselves to believe, that it is the only power by which we can sweep away those sectional privileges and interests, that impede the intelligence and industry of the community."

"And yet," said Coningsby, "the only way to terminate what, in the language of the present day, is called Class Legislation is

not to entrust power to classes. You would find a locofoco majority as much addicted to Class Legislation as a factitious aristocracy. The only power that has no class sympathy is the Sovereign."

"But suppose the case of an arbitrary Sovereign, what would be your check against him?"

"The same as against an arbitrary Parliament."

"But a Parliament is responsible."

"To whom?"

"To their constituent body."

"Suppose it was to vote itself perpetual?"

"But public opinion would prevent that."

"And is public opinion of less influence on an individual than on a body?"

"But public opinion may be indifferent. A nation may be misled—may be corrupt."

"If the nation that elects the Parliament be corrupt, the elected body will resemble it. The nation that is corrupt deserves to fall. But this only shows that there is something to be considered beyond forms of government—national character. And herein mainly should we repose our hopes. If a nation be led to aim at the good and the great, depend upon it, whatever be its form, the government will respond to its convictions and its sentiments."

"Do you then declare against Parliamentary government?"

"Far from it: I look upon political change as the greatest of evils, for it comprehends all. But if we have no faith in the permanence of the existing settlement—if the very individuals who established it are, year after year, proposing their modifications or their reconstructions—so also, while we uphold what exists, ought we to prepare ourselves for the change we deem impending?

"Now I would not that either ourselves, or our fellow-citizens, should be taken unawares as in 1832, when the very men who opposed the Reform Bill, offered contrary objections to it which destroyed each other, so ignorant were they of its real character, its historical causes, its political consequences. We should now so act that, when the occasion arrives, we should clearly comprehend what we want, and have formed an opinion as to the best means by which that want can be supplied.

"For this purpose I would accustom the public mind to the contemplation of an existing though torpid power in the constitution, capable of removing our social grievances, were we to transfer to it those prerogatives which the Parliament has gradually usurped, and used in a manner which has produced the present material and moral disorganisation. The House of Commons is the house of a

few; the Sovereign is the sovereign of all. The proper leader of the people is the individual who sits upon the throne."

"Then you abjure the Representative principle?"

"Why so? Representation is not necessarily, or even in a principal sense, Parliamentary. Parliament is not sitting at this moment, and yet the nation is represented in its highest as well as in its most minute interests. Not a grievance escapes notice and redress. I see in the newspaper this morning that a pedagogue has brutally chastised his pupil. It is a fact known over all England. We must not forget that a principle of government is reserved for our days that we shall not find in our Aristotles, or even in the forests of Tacitus, nor in our Saxon Wittenagemotes, nor in our Plantagenet parliaments. Opinion now is supreme, and Opinion speaks in print. The representation of the Press is far more complete than the representation of Parliament. Parliamentary representation was the happy device of a ruder age, to which it was admirably adapted: an age of semi-civilization, when there was a leading class in the community; but it exhibits many symptoms of desuetude. It is controlled by a system of representation more vigorous and comprehensive; which absorbs its duties and fulfils them more efficiently, and in which discussion is pursued on fairer terms, and often with more depth and information."

"And to what power would you entrust the function of Taxation?"

"To some power that would employ it more discreetly than in creating our present amount of debt, and in establishing our present system of imposts.

"In a word, true wisdom lies in the policy that would effect its ends by the influence of opinion, and yet by the means of existing forms. Nevertheless, if we are forced to revolutions, let us propose to our consideration the idea of a free monarchy, established on fundamental laws, itself the apex of a vast pile of municipal and local government, ruling an educated people, represented by a free and intellectual press. Before such a royal authority, supported by such a national opinion, the sectional anomalies of our country would disappear. Under such a system, where qualification would not be parliamentary, but personal, even statesmen would be educated; we should have no more diplomatists who could not speak French—no more bishops ignorant of theology—no more generals-in-chief who never saw a field.

"Now there is a polity adapted to our laws, our institutions, our feelings, our manners, our traditions—a polity capable of great ends, and appealing to high sentiments—a polity which, in my opinion, would render government an object of national affection,

which would terminate sectional anomalies, assuage religious heats, and extinguish Chartism."

"You said to me yesterday," said Millbank, after a pause, quoting the words of another, which you adopted, that Man was made to adore and to obey. Now you have shown to me the means by which you deem it possible that government might become no longer odious to the subject; you have shown how man may be induced to obey. But there are duties and interests for man beyond political obedience, and social comfort, and national greatness—higher interests and greater duties. How would you deal with their spiritual necessities? You think you can combat political infidelity in a nation by the principle of enlightened loyalty; how would you encounter religious infidelity in a state? By what means is the principle of profound reverence to be revived? How, in short, is man to be led to adore?"

"Ah! that is a subject which I have not forgotten," replied Coningsby. "I know from your letters how deeply it has engaged your thoughts. I confess to you that it has often filled mine with perplexity and depression. When we were at Eton, and both of us impregnated with the contrary prejudices in which we had been brought up, there was still between us one common ground of sympathy and trust; we reposed with confidence and affection in the bosom of our Church. Time and thought, with both of us have only matured the spontaneous veneration of our boyhood. But time and thought have also shown me that the Church of our heart is not in a position, as regards the community, consonant with its original and essential character, or with the welfare of the nation."

"The character of a Church is universality," replied Millbank. "Once the Church in this country was universal in principle and practice; when wedded to the State, it continued at least universal in principle, if not in practice. What is it now? All ties between the State and the Church are abolished, except those which tend to its danger and degradation.

"What can be more anomalous than the present connection between State and Church? Every condition on which it was originally consented to has been cancelled. That original alliance was, in my view, an equal calamity for the nation and the Church; but, at least, it was an intelligible compact. Parliament, then consisting only of members of the Established Church, was on ecclesiastical matters, a lay synod, and might, in some points of view, be esteemed a necessary portion of Church government. But you have effaced this exclusive character of Parliament; you have determined that a communion with the Established Church shall no longer be part of the qualification for sitting in the House of Commons. There is no reason, as far as the consti-

tution avails, why every member of the House of Commons should not be a dissenter. But the whole power of the country is concentred in the House of Commons. The House of Lords, even the Monarch himself, has openly announced and confessed, within these ten years, that the will of the House of Commons is supreme. A single vote of the House of Commons, in 1832, made the Duke of Wellington declare, in the House of Lords, that he was obliged to abandon his sovereign in 'the most difficult and distressing circumstances.' The House of Commons is absolute. It is the State. 'L'Etat c'est moi.' The House of Commons virtually appoints the bishops. A sectarian assembly appoints the bishops of the Established Church. They may appoint twenty Hoadleys. James II. was expelled the throne because he appointed a Roman Catholic to an Anglican see. A parliament might do this to-morrow with impunity. And this is the constitution in Church and State which Conservative dinners toast! The only consequences of the present union of Church and State are, that, on the side of the State there is perpetual interference in ecclesiastical government, and on the side of the Church a sedulous avoidance of all those principles on which alone Church government can be established, and by the influence of which alone can the Church of England again become universal."

"But it is urged that the State protects its revenues?"

"No ecclesiastical revenues should be safe that require protection. Modern history is a history of Church spoliation. And by whom? Not by the people: not by the democracy. No, it is the emperor, the king, the feudal baron, the court minion. The estate of the Church is the estate of the people, as long as the Church is governed on its real principles. The Church is the medium by which the despised and degraded classes assert the native equality of man, and vindicate the rights and power of intellect. It made, in the darkest hour of Norman rule, the son of a Saxon pedlar Primate of England, and placed Nicholas Breakspear, a Hertfordshire peasant, on the throne of the Cæsars. It would do as great things now, if it were divorced from the degrading and tyrannical connection that enchains it. You would have other sons of peasants Bishops of England, instead of men appointed to that sacred office solely because they were the needy scions of a factitious aristocracy; men of gross ignorance, profligate habits, and grinding extortion, who have disgraced the episcopal throne, and profaned the altar."

"But surely you cannot justly extend such a description to the present bench?"

"Surely not: I speak of the past—of the past that has produced so much present evil. We live in decent times—frigid,

latitudinarian, alarmed, decorous. A priest is scarcely deemed in our days a fit successor of the authors of the gospels, if he be not the editor of a Greek play; and he who follows St. Paul must now at least have been private tutor of some young nobleman who has taken a good degree! And then you are all astonished that the Church is not universal! Why! nothing but the indestructibleness of its principles, however feebly pursued, could have maintained even the disorganised body that still survives.

"And yet, my dear Coningsby, with all its past errors and all its present deficiencies, it is by the Church—I would have said until I listened to you to-night—by the Church alone that I see any chance of regenerating the national character. The parochial system, though shaken by the fatal poor-law, is still the most ancient, the most comprehensive, and the most popular institution of the country; the younger priests are, in general, men whose souls are awake to the high mission which they have to fulfil, and which their predecessors so neglected; there is, I think, a rising feeling in the community, that parliamentary intercourse in matters ecclesiastical has not tended either to the spiritual or the material elevation of the humbler orders. Divorce the Church from the State, and the spiritual power that struggled against the brute force of the dark ages, against tyrannical monarchs and barbarous barons, will struggle again in opposition to influences of a different form, but of a similar tendency; equally selfish, equally insensible, equally barbarising. The priests of God are the tribunes of the people. O, ignorant! that with such a mission they should ever have cringed in the antechambers of ministers, or bowed before parliamentary committees!"

"The Utilitarian system is dead," said Coningsby. "It has passed through the heaven of philosophy like a hail-storm—cold, noisy, sharp, and peppering, and it has melted away. And yet can we wonder that it found some success, when we consider the political ignorance and social torpor which it assailed? Anointed kings turned into chief magistrates, and therefore much overpaid; estates of the realm changed into parliaments of virtual representation, and therefore requiring real reform; holy Church transformed into national establishment, and therefore grumbled at by all the nation for whom it was not supported. What an inevitable harvest of sedition, radicalism, infidelity! I really think there is no society, however great its resources, that could long resist the united influences of chief magistrate, virtual representation, and Church establishment!"

"I have immense faith in the new generation," said Millbank, eagerly.

"It is a holy thing to see a state saved by its youth," said

Coningsby; and then he added, in a tone of humility, if not of depression, "But what a task! What a variety of qualities, what a combination of circumstances is requisite! What bright abilities and what noble patience! What confidence from the people, what favour from the Most High!"

"But He will favour us," said Millbank. "And I say to you as Nathan said unto David, 'Thou art the man!' You were our leader at Eton; the friends of your heart and boyhood still cling and cluster round you! they are all men whose position forces them into public life. It is a nucleus of honour, faith, and power. You have only to dare. And will you not dare? It is our privilege to live in an age when the career of the highest ambition is identified with the performance of the greatest good. Of the present epoch it may be truly said, 'Who dares to be good, dares to be great.'"

"Heaven is above all," said Coningsby. "The curtain of our fate is still undrawn. We are happy in our friends, dear Millbank, and whatever lights, we will stand together. For myself, I prefer fame to life; and yet, the consciousness of heroic deeds to the most wide-spread celebrity."

CHAPTER III.

THE beautiful light of summer had never shone on a scene and surrounding landscape which recalled happier images of English nature, and better recollections of English manners, than that to which we would now introduce our readers. One of those true old English Halls, now unhappily so rare, built in the time of the Tudors, and in its elaborate timber-framing and decorative woodwork, indicating, perhaps, the scarcity of brick and stone at the period of its structure, as much as the grotesque genius of its fabricator, rose on a terrace surrounded by ancient and very formal gardens. The hall itself, during many generations, had been vigilantly and tastefully preserved by its proprietors. There was not a point which was not as fresh as if it had been renovated but yesterday. It stood a huge and strange blending of Grecian, Gothic, and Italian architecture, with a wild dash of the fantastic in addition. The lantern watch-towers of a baronial castle were placed in juxtaposition with doric columns employed for chimneys, while under oriel windows might be observed Italian doorways with Grecian pediments. Beyond the extensive gardens an avenue of Spanish

chestnuts at each point of the compass approached the mansion, or led into a small park which was table-land, its limits opening on all sides to beautiful and extensive valleys, sparkling with cultivation, except at one point, where the river Darl formed the boundary of the domain, and then spread in many a winding through the rich country beyond.

Such was Hellingsley, the new home that Oswald Millbank was about to visit for the first time. Coningsby and himself had travelled together as far as Darlford, where their roads diverged, and they had separated with an engagement on the part of Coningsby to visit Hellingsley on the morrow. As they had travelled along, Coningsby had frequently led the conversation to domestic topics; gradually he had talked, and talked much, of Edith. Without an obtrusive curiosity, he extracted, unconsciously to his companion, traits of her character and early days, which filled him with a wild and secret interest. The thought that in a few hours he was to meet her again, infused into his being a degree of transport, which the very necessity of repressing before his companion rendered more magical and thrilling. How often it happens in life that we have with a grave face to discourse of the most ordinary topics, while all the time our heart and memory are engrossed with some enchanting secret!

The castle of his grandfather presented a far different scene on the arrival of Coningsby, to that which it had offered on his first visit. The Marquess had given him a formal permission to repair to it at his pleasure, and had instructed the steward accordingly. But he came without notice, at a season of the year when the absence of all sports made his arrival unexpected. The scattered and sauntering household roused themselves into action, and contemplated the conviction that it might be necessary to do some service for their wages. There was a stir in that vast, sleepy castle. At last the steward was found, and came forward to welcome their young master, whose simple wants were limited to the rooms he had formerly occupied.

Coningsby reached the castle a little before sunset, almost the same hour that he had arrived there more than three years ago. How much had happened in the interval! Coningsby had already lived long enough to find interest in pondering over the past. That past too must inevitably exercise a great influence over his present. He recalled his morning drive with his grandfather, to the brink of that river which was the boundary between his own domain and Hellingsley. Who dwelt at Hellingsley now?

Restless, excited, not insensible to the difficulties, perhaps the dangers, of his position, yet full of an entrancing emotion in which all thoughts and feelings seemed to merge, Coningsby went forth

into the fair gardens to muse over his love amid objects as beautiful. A rosy light hung over the rare shrubs and tall fantastic trees; while a rich yet darker tint suffused the distant woods. This euthanasia of the day exercises a strange influence on the hearts of those who love. Who has not felt it? Magical emotions that touch the immortal part!

But as for Coningsby, the mitigating hour that softens the heart made his spirit brave. Amid the ennobling sympathies of nature, the pursuits and purposes of worldly prudence and conventional advantage subsided into their essential nothingness. He willed to blend his life and fate with a being beautiful as that nature that subdued him, and he felt in his own breast the intrinsic energies that in spite of all obstacles should mould such an imagination into reality.

He descended the slopes, now growing dimmer in the fleeting light, into the park. The stillness was almost supernatural; the jocund sounds of day had died, and the voices of the night had not commenced. His heart too was still. A sacred calm had succeeded to that distraction of emotion which had agitated him the whole day, while he had mused over his love and the infinite and insurmountable barriers that seemed to oppose his will. Now he felt one of those strong groundless convictions that are the inspirations of passion, that all would yield to him as to one holding an enchanted wand.

Onward he strolled; it seemed without purpose, yet always proceeding. A pale and then gleaming tint stole over the masses of mighty timber; and soon a glittering light flooded the lawns and glades. The moon was high in her summer heaven, and still Coningsby strolled on. He crossed the broad lawns, he traversed the bright glades: amid the gleaming and shadowy woods, he traced his prescient way.

He came to the bank of a rushing river, foaming in the moonlight, and wafting on its blue breast the shadow of a thousand stars.

"O river!" he said, "that rollest to my mistress, bear her, bear her my heart!"

CHAPTER IV.

Lady Wallinger and Edith were together in the morning room of Hellingsley, the morrow after the arrival of Oswald. Edith was arranging flowers in a vase, while her aunt was embroi-

dering a Spanish peasant in correct costume. The daughter of Millbank looked as bright and fragrant as the fair creations that surrounded her. Beautiful to watch her as she arranged their forms and composed their groups; to mark her eye glance with gratification at some happy combination of colour, or to listen to her delight as they wafted to her in gratitude their perfume. Oswald and Sir Joseph were surveying the stables; Mr. Millbank, who had been daily expected for the last week from the factories, had not yet arrived.

"I must say he gained my heart from the first," said Lady Wallinger.

"I wish the gardener would send us more roses," said Edith.

"He is so very superior to any young man I ever met," continued Lady Wallinger.

"I think we must have this vase entirely of roses; don't you think so, aunt?" inquired her niece.

"I am very fond of roses," said Lady Wallinger. "What beautiful bouquets Mr. Coningsby gave us at Paris, Edith!"

"Beautiful!"

"I must say, I was very happy when I met Mr. Coningsby again at Cambridge," said Lady Wallinger. "It gave much greater pleasure than seeing any of the colleges."

"How delighted Oswald seems at having Mr. Coningsby for a companion again!" said Edith.

"And very naturally," said Lady Wallinger. "Oswald ought to deem himself very fortunate in having such a friend. I am sure the kindness of Mr. Coningsby when we met him at Cambridge is what I never shall forget. But he always was my favourite from the first I saw him at Paris. Do you know, Edith, I liked him best of all your admirers?"

"Oh! no, aunt," said Edith smiling, "not more than Lord Beaumanoir: you forget your great favourite, Lord Beaumanoir."

"But I did not know Mr. Coningsby at Rome," said Lady Wallinger; "I cannot agree that anybody is equal to Mr. Coningsby. I cannot tell you how pleased I am that he is our neighbour!"

As Lady Wallinger gave a finishing stroke to the jacket of her Andalusian, Edith, vividly blushing, yet speaking in a voice of affected calmness, said—

"Here is Mr. Coningsby, aunt."

And, truly, at this moment our hero might be discerned, approaching the hall by one of the avenues; and in a few minutes there was a ringing at the hall bell, and then, after a short pause, the servants announced Mr. Coningsby, and ushered him into the morning room.

Edith was embarrassed; the frankness and the gaiety of her

manner had deserted her; Coningsby was rather earnest than self-possessed. Each felt at first that the presence of Lady Wallinger was a relief. The ordinary topics of conversation were in sufficient plenty; reminiscences of Paris, impressions of Hellingsley, his visit to Oxford, Lady Wallinger's visit to Cambridge. In ten minutes their voices seemed to sound to each other as they did in the Rue de Rivoli, and their mutual perplexity had in a great degree subsided.

Oswald and Sir Joseph now entered the room, and the conversation became general. Hellingsley was the subject on which Coningsby dwelt; he was charmed with all that he had seen; wished to see more. Sir Joseph was quite prepared to accompany him; but Lady Wallinger, who seemed to read Coningsby's wishes in his eyes, proposed that the inspection should be general; and in the course of half an hour Coningsby was walking by the side of Edith, and sympathising with all the natural charms to which her quick taste and lively expression called his notice and appreciation. Few things more delightful than a country ramble with a sweet companion! Exploring woods, wandering over green commons, loitering in shady lanes, resting on rural stiles; the air full of perfume, the heart full of bliss!"

It seemed to Coningsby that he had never been happy before. A thrilling joy pervaded his being. He could have sung like a bird. His heart was as sunny as the summer scene. Past and Future were absorbed in the flowing hour; not an allusion to Paris, not a speculation on what might arrive; but infinite expressions of agreement, sympathy; a multitude of slight phrases, that, however couched, had but one meaning—congeniality. He felt each moment her voice becoming more tender; his heart gushing in soft expressions; each moment he was more fascinated; her step was grace, her glance was beauty. Now she touched him by some phrase of sweet simplicity; or carried him spell-bound by her airy merriment.

Oswald assumed that Coningsby remained to dine with them. There was not even the ceremony of invitation. Coningsby could not but remember his dinner at Millbank, and the timid hostess whom he then addressed so often in vain, as he gazed upon the bewitching and accomplished woman whom he now passionately loved. It was a most agreeable dinner. Oswald, happy in his friend being his guest, under his own roof, indulged in unwonted gaiety.

The ladies withdrew; Sir Joseph began to talk politics, although the young men had threatened their fair companions immediately to follow them. This was the period of the Bed-Chamber Plot, when Sir Robert Peel accepted and resigned power in the course

of three days. Sir Joseph, who had originally made up his mind to support a Conservative government when he deemed it inevitable, had for the last month endeavoured to compensate for this trifling error by vindicating the conduct of his friends, and reprobating the behaviour of those who would deprive her Majesty of the "friends of her youth." Sir Joseph was a most chivalrous champion of the "friends-of-her-youth" principle. Sir Joseph, who was always moderate and conciliatory in his talk, though he would go, at any time, any lengths for his party, expressed himself to-day with extreme sobriety, as he was determined not to hurt the feelings of Mr. Coningsby, and he principally confined himself to urging temperate questions, somewhat in the following fashion:—

"I admit that, on the whole, under ordinary circumstances, it would perhaps have been more convenient that these appointments should have remained with Sir Robert; but don't you think that, under the peculiar circumstances, being friends of her Majesty's youth?" &c. &c.

Sir Joseph was extremely astonished when Coningsby replied that he thought, under no circumstances, should any appointment in the Royal Household be dependent on the voice of the House of Commons, though he was far from admiring the "friends-of-her-youth" principle, which he looked upon as very impertinent.

"But surely," said Sir Joseph, "the Minister being responsible to Parliament, it must follow that all great offices of State should be filled at his discretion."

"But where do you find this principle of Ministerial responsibility?" inquired Coningsby.

"And is not a Minister responsible to his Sovereign?" inquired Millbank.

Sir Joseph seemed a little confused. He had always heard that Ministers were responsible to Parliament; and he had a vague conviction, notwithstanding the reanimating loyalty of the Bed-Chamber Plot, that the Sovereign of England was a nonentity. He took refuge in indefinite expressions, and observed, "The Responsibility of Ministers is surely a constitutional doctrine!"

"The Ministers of the Crown are responsible to their master; they are not the Ministers of Parliament."

"But then you know virtually," said Sir Joseph, "the Parliament, that is, the House of Commons, governs the country."

"It did before 1832," said Coningsby; "but that is all past now. We got rid of that with the Venetian Constitution."

"The Venetian Constitution!" said Sir Joseph.

"To be sure," said Millbank. "We were governed in this country by the Venetian Constitution from the accession of the

House of Hanover. But that yoke is past. And now I hope we are in a state of transition from the Italian Dogeship to the English Monarchy."

"King, Lords, and Commons, the Venetian Constitution!" exclaimed Sir Joseph.

"But they were phrases," said Coningsby, "not facts. The King was a Doge; the Cabinet the Council of Ten. Your Parliament, that you call Lords and Commons, was nothing more than the Great Council of Nobles."

"The resemblance was complete," said Millbank, "and no wonder, for it was not accidental; the Venetian Constitution was intentionally copied."

"We should have had the Venetian Republic in 1640," said Coningsby, "had it not been for the Puritans. Geneva beat Venice."

"I am sure these ideas are not very generally known," said Sir Joseph, bewildered.

"Because you have had your history written by the Venetian party," said Coningsby, "and it has been their interest to conceal them."

"I will venture to say that there are very few men on our side in the House of Commons," said Sir Joseph, "who are aware that they were born under a Venetian Constitution."

"Let us go to the ladies," said Millbank, smiling.

Edith was reading a letter as they entered.

"A letter from papa," she exclaimed, looking up at her brother with great animation. "We may expect him every day; and yet, alas! he cannot fix one."

They now all spoke of Millbank, and Coningsby was happy that he was familiar with the scene. At length he ventured to say to Edith, "You once made me a promise which you never fulfilled. I shall claim it to-night."

"And what can that be?"

"The song that you promised me at Millbank more than three years ago."

"Your memory is very good."

"It has dwelt upon the subject."

Then they spoke for awhile of other recollections, and then Coningsby appealing to Lady Wallinger for her influence, Edith rose and took up her guitar. Her voice was rich and sweet; the air she sang gay, even fantastically frolic, such as the girls of Granada chaunt trooping home from some country festival; her soft, dark eye brightened with joyous sympathy; and ever and anon, with an arch grace, she beat the guitar, in chorus, with her pretty hand.

The moon wanes; and Coningsby must leave these enchanted halls. Oswald walked homeward with him until he reached the domain of his grandfather. Then mounting his horse, Coningsby bade his friend farewell till the morrow, and made his best way to the Castle.

CHAPTER V.

THERE is a romance in every life. The emblazoned page of Coningsby's existence was now open. It had been prosperous before—with some moments of excitement, some of delight; but they had all found, at it were, their origin in worldly considerations, or been inevitably mixed up with them. At Paris, for example, he loved, or thought he loved. But there not an hour could elapse without his meeting some person, or hearing something, which disturbed the beauty of his emotions, or broke his spell-bound thoughts. There was his grandfather hating the Millbanks, or Sidonia loving them; and common people, in the common world, making common observations on them—asking who they were, or telling who they were—and brushing the bloom of all life's fresh delicious fancies with their coarse handling.

But now his feelings were ethereal. He loved passionately—and he loved in a scene and in a society as sweet, as pure, and as refined as his imagination and his heart. There was no malicious gossip, no callous chatter to profane his ear and desecrate his sentiment. All that he heard or saw was worthy of the summer sky—the still green woods, the gushing river, the gardens and terraces, the stately and fantastic dwellings, among which his life now glided as in some dainty and gorgeous masque.

All the soft, social, domestic sympathies of his nature, which, however abundant, had never been cultivated, were developed by the life he was now leading. It was not merely that he lived in the constant presence, and under the constant influence of one whom he adored, that made him so happy. He was surrounded by beings who found felicity in the interchange of kind feelings and kind words—in the cultivation of happy talents and refined tastes, and the enjoyment of a life which their own good sense, and their own good hearts made them both comprehend and appreciate. Ambition lost much of its splendour, even his lofty aspirations something of their hallowing impulse of paramount duty, when Coningsby felt how much ennobling delight was consistent with the seclusion of a private station; and mused over an existence to be

passed amid woods and waterfalls with a fair hand locked in his, or surrounded by his friends in some ancestral hall.

The morning after his first visit to Hellingsley Coningsby rejoined his friends, as he had promised Oswald, at their breakfast-table; and day after day he came with the early sun, and left them only when the late moon silvered the keep of Coningsby Castle. Mr. Millbank, who wrote daily, and was daily to be expected, did not arrive. A week, a week of unbroken bliss, had vanished away—passed in long rides and longer walks, sunset saunterings, and sometimes moonlit strolls; talking of flowers, and thinking of things even sweeter; listening to délicious songs, and sometimes reading aloud some bright romance or some inspiring lay.

One day Coningsby, who arrived at the hall unexpectedly late—indeed it was some hours past noon, for he had been detained by despatches which arrived at the Castle from Mr. Rigby, and which required his interposition—found the ladies alone, and was told that Sir Joseph and Oswald were at the fishing-cottage, where they wished him to join them. He was in no haste to do this; and Lady Wallinger proposed that when they felt inclined to ramble they should all walk down to the fishing-cottage together. So, seating himself by the side of Edith, who was tinting a sketch which she had made of a rich oriel of Hellingsley, the morning passed away in that slight and yet subtle talk in which a lover delights, and in which, while asking a thousand questions, that seem at the first glance sufficiently trifling, he is indeed often conveying a meaning that is not expressed, or attempting to discover a feeling that is hidden. And these are occasions, when glances meet and glances are withdrawn: the tongue may speak idly—the eye is more eloquent, and often more true.

Coningsby looked up; Lady Wallinger, who had more than once announced that she was going to put on her bonnet, was gone. Yet still he continued to talk trifles; and still Edith listened.

"Of all that you have told me," said Edith, "nothing pleases me so much as your description of St. Geneviève. How much I should like to catch the deer at sunset on the heights! What a pretty drawing it would make!"

"You would like Eustace Lyle," said Coningsby. "He is so shy and yet so ardent."

"You have such a band of friends. Oswald was saying this morning there was no one who had so many devoted friends."

"We are all united by sympathy. It is the only bond of friendship; and yet friendship——"

"Edith," said Lady Wallinger, looking into the room from the garden, with her bonnet on, "you will find me roaming on the terrace."

"We come, dear aunt."

And yet they did not move. There were yet a few pencil touches to be given to the tinted sketch—Coningsby would cut the pencils.

"Would you give me," he said, "some slight memorial of Hellingsley and your art? I would not venture to hope for anything half so beautiful as this; but the slightest sketch. It would make me so happy when away to have it hanging in my room."

A blush suffused the cheek of Edith; she turned her head a little aside, as if she were arranging some drawings. And then she said, in a somewhat hushed and hesitating voice—

"I am sure I will do so; and with pleasure. A view of the Hall itself; I think that would be the best memorial. Where shall we take it from? We will decide in our walk;" and she rose, and promising immediately to return, left the room.

Coningsby leant over the mantel in deep abstraction, gazing vacantly on a miniature of the father of Edith. A light step roused him; she had returned. Unconsciously he greeted her with a glance of ineffable tenderness.

They went forth; it was a grey, sultry day. Indeed it was the covered sky which had led to the fishing scheme of the morning—Sir Joseph was a very expert and accomplished angler; and the Darl was renowned for its sport. They lingered before they reached the terrace where they were to find Lady Wallinger, observing the different points of view which the Hall presented, and debating which was to form the subject of Coningsby's drawing; for already it was to be not merely a sketch, but a drawing, the most finished that the bright and effective pencil of Edith could achieve. If it really were to be placed in his room, and were to be a memorial of Hellingsley, her artistic reputation demanded a masterpiece.

They reached the terrace: Lady Wallinger was not there, nor could they observe her in the vicinity. Coningsby was quite certain that she had gone onward to the fishing-cottage, and expected them to follow her; and he convinced Edith of the justness of his opinion. To the fishing-cottage, therefore, they bent their steps. They emerged from the gardens into the park, sauntering over the table land, and seeking as much as possible the shade, in the soft but oppressive atmosphere. At the limit of the table land their course lay by a wild but winding path through a gradual and wooded declivity. While they were yet in this craggy and romantic woodland, the big fervent drops began to fall. Coningsby urged Edith to seek at once a natural shelter; but she, who knew the country, assured him that the fishing-cottage was

close by, and that they might reach it before the rain could do them any harm.

And truly, at this moment emerging from the wood, they found themselves in the valley of the Darl. The river here was narrow and winding, but full of life; rushing, and clear but for the dark sky it reflected; with high banks of turf and tall trees; the silver birch, above all others, in clustering groups; infinitely picturesque. At the turn of the river, about two hundred yards distant, Coningsby observed the low, dark roof of the fishing-cottage on its banks. They descended from the woods to the margin of the stream by a flight of turfen steps, Coningsby holding Edith's hand as he guided her progress

The drops became thicker. They reached, at a rapid pace, the cottage. The absent boat indicated that Sir Joseph and Oswald were on the river. The cottage was an old building of rustic logs, with a very shelving roof, so that you might obtain sufficient shelter without entering its walls. Coningsby found a rough garden seat for Edith. The shower was now violent.

Nature, like man, sometimes weeps from gladness. It is the joy and tenderness of her heart that seek relief; and these are summer showers. In this instance the vehemence of her emotion was transient, though the tears kept stealing down her cheek for a long time, and gentle sighs and sobs might for some period be distinguished. The oppressive atmosphere had evaporated; the grey, sullen tint had disappeared; a soft breeze came dancing up the stream; a glowing light fell upon the woods and waters; the perfume of trees and flowers and herbs floated around. There was a carolling of birds; a hum of happy insects in the air; freshness and stir, and a sense of joyous life, pervaded all things; it seemed that the heart of all creation opened.

Coningsby, after repeatedly watching the shower with Edith, and speculating on its progress, which did not much annoy them, had seated himself on a log almost at her feet. And assuredly a maiden and a youth more beautiful and engaging had seldom met before in a scene more fresh and fair. Edith on her rustic seat watched the now blue and foaming river, and the birch-trees with a livelier tint, and quivering in the sunset air; an expression of tranquil bliss suffused her beautiful brow, and spoke from the thrilling tenderness of her soft dark eye. Coningsby gazed on that countenance with a glance of entranced rapture. His cheek was flushed, his eye gleamed with dazzling lustre. She turned her head; she met that glance, and, troubled, she withdrew her own.

"Edith!" he said, in a tone of tremulous passion, "let me call you Edith! Yes," he continued, gently taking her hand, "let me call you my Edith! I love you!"

She did not withdraw her hand; but turned away a face flushed as the impending twilight.

CHAPTER VI.

It was past the dinner hour when Edith and Coningsby reached the Hall; an embarrassing circumstance, but mitigated by the conviction that they had not to encounter a very critical inspection. What, then, were their feelings when the first servant that they met informed them that Mr. Millbank had arrived! Edith never could have believed that the return of her beloved father to his home could ever have been to her other than a cause of delight. And yet now she trembled when she heard the announcement. The mysteries of love were fast involving her existence. But this was not the season of meditation. Her heart was still agitated by the tremulous admission that she responded to that fervent and adoring love whose eloquent music still sounded in her ear, and the pictures of whose fanciful devotion flitted over her agitated vision. Unconsciously she pressed the arm of Coningsby as the servant spoke, and then, without looking into his face, whispering him to be quick, she sprang away.

As for Coningsby, notwithstanding the elation of his heart, and the ethereal joy which flowed in all his veins, the name of Mr. Millbank sounded something like a knell. However this was not the time to reflect. He obeyed the hint of Edith: made the most rapid toilet that ever was consummated by a happy lover, and in a few minutes entered the drawing-room of Hellingsley, to encounter the gentleman whom he hoped by some means or other, quite inconceivable, might some day be transformed into his father-in-law, and the fulfilment of his consequent duties towards whom he had commenced by keeping him waiting for dinner.

"How do you do, sir?" said Mr. Millbank, extending his hand to Coningsby. "You seem to have taken a long walk."

Coningsby looked round to the kind Lady Wallinger, and half addressed his murmured answer to her, explaining how they had lost her, and their way, and were caught in a storm or a shower, which, as it terminated about three hours back, and the fishing-cottage was little more than a mile from the hall, very satisfactorily accounted for their not being in time for dinner.

Lady Wallinger then said something about the lowering clouds having frightened her from the terrace, and Sir Joseph and Oswald talked a little of their sport, and of their having seen an otter; but there was, or at least there seemed to Coningsby, a tone of general embarrassment which distressed him. The fact is, keeping people from dinner, under any circumstances, is distressing. They are obliged to talk at the very moment when they wish to use their powers of expression for a very different purpose. They are faint, and conversation makes them more exhausted. A gentleman, too, fond of his family, who in turn are devoted to him, making a great and inconvenient effort to reach them by dinner time, to please and surprise them; and finding them all dispersed, dinner so late that he might have reached home in good time without any great inconvenient effort; his daughter, whom he has wished a thousand times to embrace, taking a singularly long ramble with no other companion than a young gentleman, whom he did not exactly expect to see; all these are circumstances, individually perhaps slight, and yet encountered collectively, it may be doubted whether they would not a little ruffle even the sweetest temper.

Mr. Millbank, too, had not the sweetest temper, though not a bad one; a little quick and fiery. But then he had a kind heart. And when Edith, who had providentially sent down a message to order dinner, entered and embraced him at the very moment that dinner was announced, her father forgot everything in his joy in seeing her, and his pleasure in being surrounded by his friends. He gave his hand to Lady Wallinger; and Sir Joseph led away his niece. Coningsby put his arm around the astonished neck of Oswald, as if they were once more in the playing fields of Eton.

"By Jove! my dear fellow," he exclaimed, "I am so sorry we kept your father from dinner."

As Edith headed her father's table, according to his rigid rule, Coningsby was on one side of her. They never spoke so little; Coningsby would have never unclosed his lips, had he followed his humour. He was in a stupor of happiness; the dining-room took the appearance of the fishing-cottage; and he saw nothing but the flowing river. Lady Wallinger was however next to him, and that was a relief; for he felt always she was his friend. Sir Joseph, a good-hearted man, and on subjects with which he was acquainted full of sound sense, was invaluable to-day, for he entirely kept up the conversation, speaking of things which greatly interested Mr. Millbank. And so their host soon recovered his good temper; he addressed several times his observations to Coningsby, and was careful to take wine with him. On the whole, affairs went on flowingly enough. The gentlemen, indeed, stayed much longer over their wine than on the preceding days, and Coningsby did not

venture on the liberty of quitting the room before his host. It was as well. Edith required repose. She tried to seek it on the bosom of her aunt, as she breathed to her the delicious secret of her life. When the gentlemen returned to the drawing-room, the ladies were not there.

This rather disturbed Mr. Millbank again; he had not seen enough of his daughter; he wished to hear her sing. But Edith managed to reappear; and even to sing. Then Coningsby went up to her and asked her to sing the song of the Girls of Granada. She said in a low voice, and with a fond yet serious look—

"I am not in the mood for such a song, but if you wish me——"

She sang it, and with inexpressible grace, and with an arch vivacity, that to a fine observer would have singularly contrasted with the almost solemn and even troubled expression of her countenance a moment afterwards.

The day was about to die; the day the most important, the most precious in the lives of Harry Coningsby and Edith Millbank. Words had been spoken, vows breathed, which were to influence their careers for ever. For them hereafter there was to be but one life, one destiny, one world. Each of them was still in such a state of tremulous excitement, that neither had found time or occasion to ponder over the mighty result. They both required solitude; they both longed to be alone. Coningsby rose to depart. He pressed the soft hand of Edith, and his glance spoke his soul.

"We shall see you at breakfast to-morrow, Coningsby!" said Oswald, very loud, knowing that the presence of his father would make Coningsby hesitate about coming. Edith's heart fluttered; but she said nothing. It was with delight she heard her father, after a moment's pause, say—

"Oh! I beg we may have that pleasure."

"Not quite at so early an hour," said Coningsby; "but if you will permit me, I hope to have the pleasure of hearing from you to-morrow, sir, that your journey has not fatigued you."

CHAPTER VII.

To be alone; to have no need of feigning a tranquillity he could not feel; of coining common-place courtesy when his heart was gushing with rapture; this was a great relief to Coningsby, though gained by a separation from Edith.

The deed was done; he had breathed his long-brooding passion, he had received the sweet expression of her sympathy, he had gained the long-coveted heart. Youth, beauty, love, the innocence of unsophisticated breasts, and the inspiration of an exquisite nature, combined to fashion the spell that now entranced his life. He turned to gaze upon the moonlit towers and peaked roofs of Hellingsley. Silent and dreamlike, the picturesque pile rested on its broad terrace flooded with the silver light, and surrounded by the quaint bowers of its fantastic gardens tipped with the glittering beam. Half hid in deep shadow, half sparkling in the midnight blaze, he recognised the oriel window that had been the subject of the morning's sketch. Almost he wished there should be some sound to assure him of his reality. But nothing broke the all-pervading stillness. Was his life to be as bright and as tranquil? And what was to be his life?

Whither was he to bear the beautiful bride he had gained? Were the portals of Coningsby the proud and hospitable gates that were to greet her? How long would they greet him after the achievement of the last four-and-twenty hours was known to their lord? Was this the return for the confiding kindness of his grandsire? That he should pledge his troth to the daughter of that grandsire's foe?

Away with such dark and scaring visions! Is it not the noon of a summer night fragrant with the breath of gardens, bright with the beam that lovers love, and soft with the breath of Ausonian breezes? Within that sweet and stately residence, dwells there not a maiden fair enough to revive chivalry; who is even now thinking of him as she leans on her pensive hand, or, if perchance she dream, recals him in her visions? And himself, is he one who would cry craven with such a lot? What avail his golden youth, his high blood, his daring and devising spirit, and all his stores of wisdom, if they help not now? Does not he feel the energy divine that can confront Fate and carve out fortunes? Besides it is nigh Midsummer Eve, and what should fairies reign for but to aid such a bright pair as this?

He recals a thousand times the scene, the moment, in which but a few hours past he dared to tell her that he loved; he recals a thousand times the still, small voice, that murmured her agitated felicity: more than a thousand times, for his heart clenched the idea as a diver grasps a gem, he recals the enraptured yet gentle embrace, that had sealed upon her blushing cheek his mystical and delicious sovereignty.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE morning broke lowering and thunderous; small white clouds, dull and immoveable, studded the leaden sky; the waters of the rushing Darl seemed to have become black and almost stagnant; the terraces of Hellingsley looked like the hard lines of a model; and the mansion itself had a harsh and metallic character. Before the chief portal of his Hall, the elder Millbank, with an air of some anxiety, surveyed the landscape and the heavens, as if he were speculating on the destiny of the day.

Often his eye wandered over the park; often with an uneasy and restless step he paced the raised walk before him. The clock of Hellingsley church had given the chimes of noon. His son and Coningsby appeared at the end of one of the avenues. His eye lightened; his lip became compressed; he advanced to meet them.

"Are you going to fish to-day, Oswald?" he inquired of his son.

"We had some thoughts of it, sir."

"A fine day for sport, I should think," he observed, as he turned towards the Hall with them.

Coningsby remarked the fanciful beauty of the portal; its twisted columns, and Caryatides carved in dark oak.

"Yes, it's very well," said Millbank; "but I really do not know why I came here; my presence is an effort. Oswald does not care for the place; none of us do, I believe."

"Oh! I like it now, father; and Edith doats on it."

"She was very happy at Millbank," saith the father, rather sharply.

"We are all of us happy at Millbank," said Oswald.

"I was much struck with the valley and the whole settlement when I first saw it," said Coningsby.

"Suppose you go and see about the tackle, Oswald," said Mr. Millbank, "and Mr. Coningsby and I will take a stroll on the terrace in the meantime."

The habit of obedience, which was supreme in this family, instantly carried Oswald away, though he was rather puzzled why his father should be so particularly anxious about the preparation of the fishing-tackle, as he very rarely used it. His son had no sooner departed than Mr. Millbank turned to Coningsby, and said very abruptly—

"You have never seen my own room here, Mr. Coningsby;

step in; for I wish to say a word to you." And thus speaking, he advanced before the astonished, and rather agitated Coningsby, and led the way through a door and long passage to a room of moderate dimensions, partly furnished as a library, and full of parliamentary papers and blue-books. Shutting the door with some earnestness and pointing to a chair, he begged his guest to be seated. Both in their chairs, Mr. Millbank, clearing his throat, said without preface, "I have reason to believe, Mr. Coningsby, that you are attached to my daughter?"

"I have been attached to her for a long time most ardently," replied Coningsby, in a calm and rather measured tone, but looking very pale.

"And I have reason to believe that she returns your attachment?" said Mr. Millbank.

"I believe she deigns—not to disregard it," said Coningsby, his white cheek becoming scarlet.

"It is then a mutual attachment, which, if cherished, must produce mutual unhappiness," said Mr. Millbank.

"I would fain believe the reverse," said Coningsby.

"Why?" inquired Mr. Millbank.

"Because I believe she possesses every charm, quality, and virtue, that can bless man; and because, though I can make her no equivalent return, I have a heart, if I know myself, that would struggle to deserve her."

"I know you to be a man of sense; I believe you to be a man of honour," replied Mr. Millbank. "As the first, you must feel that an union between you and my daughter is impossible; what then should be your duty as a man of correct principle is obvious."

"I could conceive that our union might be attended with difficulties," said Coningsby, in a somewhat deprecating tone.

"Sir, it is impossible," repeated Mr. Millbank, interrupting him, though not with harshness; "that is to say, there is no conceivable marriage which could be effected at greater sacrifices, and which would occasion greater misery."

"The sacrifices are more apparent to me than the misery," said Coningsby, "and even they may be imaginary."

"The sacrifices and the misery are certain and inseparable," said Mr. Millbank. "Come now, see how we stand! I speak without reserve, for this is a subject which cannot permit misconceptions, but with no feeling towards you, sir, but fair and very friendly ones. You are the grandson of my Lord Monmouth; at present enjoying his favour, but dependent on his bounty. You may be the heir of his wealth to-morrow, and to-morrow you may be the object of his hatred and persecution. Your grandfather and myself are foes; bitter, irreclaimable, to the death. It is idle to mince

phrases; I do not vindicate our mutual feelings, I may regret that they have ever arisen; I may regret it especially at this exigency. They are not the feelings of good Christians; they may be altogether to be deplored and unjustifiable; but they exist, mutually exist; and have not been confined to words. Lord Monmouth would crush me, had he the power, like a worm; and I have curbed his proud fortunes often. Were it not for this feeling, I should not be here; I purchased this estate merely to annoy him, as I have done a thousand other acts merely for his discomfiture and mortification. In our long encounter I have done him infinitely more injury than he could do me; I have been on the spot, I am active, vigilant, the maker of my fortunes. He is an epicurean, continually in foreign parts, obliged to leave the fulfilment of his will to others. But, for these very reasons, his hate is more intense. I can afford to hate him less than he hates me—I have injured him more. Here are feelings to exist between human beings! But they do exist—and now you are to go to this man, and ask his sanction to marry my daughter!"

"But I would appease these hatreds; I would allay these dark passions, the origin of which I know not, but which never could justify the end, and which lead to so much misery. I would appeal to my grandfather—I would show him Edith."

"He has looked upon as fair even as Edith," said Mr. Millbank, rising suddenly from his seat, and pacing the room, "and did that melt his heart? The experience of your own lot should have guarded you from the perils that you have so rashly meditated encountering, and the misery which you have been preparing for others besides yourself. Is my daughter to be treated like your mother? And by the same hand? Your mother's family were not Lord Monmouth's foes. They were simple and innocent people, free from all the bad passions of our nature, and ignorant of the world's ways. But because they were not noble, because they could trace no mystified descent from a foreign invader or the sacrilegious minion of some spoliating despot, their daughter was hunted from the family which should have exulted to receive her, and the land of which she was the native ornament. Why should a happier lot await you than fell to your parents? You are in the same position as your father? you meditate the same act. The only difference being aggravating circumstances in your case, which, even if I were a member of the same order as my Lord Monmouth, would prevent the possibility of a prosperous union. Marry Edith, and you blast all the prospects of your life, and entail on her a sense of unceasing humiliation. Would you do this? Should I permit you to do this?"

Coningsby, with his head resting on his arm, his face a little

shaded, his eyes fixed on the ground, listened in silence. There was a pause; broken by Coningsby, as in a low voice, without changing his posture or raising his glance, he said, "It seems, sir, that you were acquainted with my mother!"

"I knew sufficient of her," replied Mr. Millbank, with a kindling cheek, "to learn the misery that a woman may entail on herself by marrying out of her condition. I have bred my children in a respect for their class. I believe they have imbibed my feeling; though it is strange how in the commerce of the world, chance, in their friendships, has apparently baffled my designs."

"Oh! do not say it is chance, sir," said Coningsby, looking up, and speaking with much fervour. "The feelings that animate me towards your family are not the feelings of chance: they are the creation of sympathy; tried by time, tested by thought. And must they perish? Can they perish? They were inevitable; they are indestructible. Yes, sir, it is in vain to speak of the enmities that are fostered between you and my grandfather; the love that exists between your daughter and myself is stronger than all your hatreds."

"You speak like a young man, and a young man that is in love, said Mr. Millbank. "This is mere rhapsody; it will vanish in an instant before the reality of life. And you have arrived at that reality," he continued, speaking with emphasis, leaning over the back of his chair, and looking steadily at Coningsby with his grey, sagacious eye; "my daughter and yourself can meet no more"

"It is impossible you can be so cruel!" exclaimed Coningsby.

"So kind—kind to you both; for I wish to be kind to you as well as to her. You are entitled to kindness from us all; though I will tell you now, that, years ago, when the news arrived that my son's life had been saved, and had been saved by one who bore the name of Coningsby, I had a presentiment, great as was the blessing, that it might lead to unhappiness."

"I can answer for the misery of one," said Coningsby, in a tone of great despondency. "I feel as if my sun were set. Oh! why should there be such wretchedness! Why are there family hatreds and party feuds! Why am I the most wretched of men!"

"My good young friend, you will live, I doubt not, to be a very happy one. Happiness is not, as we are apt to fancy, entirely dependent on these contingencies. It is the lot of most men to endure what you are now suffering, and they can look back to such conjunctures through the vista of years with calmness."

"I may see Edith now?"

"Frankly, I should say, no. My daughter is in her room; I have had some conversation with her. Of course she suffers not

less than yourself. To see her again will only aggravate woe. You leave under this roof, sir, some sad memories, but no unkind ones. It is not likely that I can serve you, or, that you may want my aid; but whatever may be in my power, remember you may command it—without reserve and without restraint. If I control myself now, it is not because I do not respect your affliction, but because in the course of my life I have felt too much not to be able to command my feelings."

"You never could have felt what I feel now," said Coningsby, in a tone of anguish.

"You touch on delicate ground," said Millbank; "yet from me you may learn to suffer. There was a being once, not less fair than the peerless girl that you would fain call your own, and her heart was my proud possession. There were no family feuds to baffle our union, nor was I dependent on anything, but the energies which had already made me flourishing. What happiness was mine! It was the first dream of my life, and it was the last; my solitary passion, the memory of which softens my heart. Ah! you dreaming scholars, and fine gentlemen who saunter through life, you think there is no romance in the loves of a man who lives in the toil and turmoil of business. You are in deep error. Amid my career of travail, there was ever a bright form which animated exertion, inspired my invention, nerved my energy, and to gain whose heart and life I first made many of those discoveries, and entered into many of those speculations, that have since been the foundation of my wide prosperity.

"Her faith was pledged to me; I lived upon her image; the day was even talked of when I should bear her to the home that I had proudly prepared for her.

"There came a young noble, a warrior who had never seen war, glittering with gew-gaws. He was quartered in the town where the mistress of my heart, and who was soon to share my life and my fortunes, resided. The tale is too bitter not to be brief. He saw her, he sighed; I will hope that he loved her; she gave him with rapture the heart which perhaps she found she had never given me; and instead of bearing the name I had once hoped to have called her by, she pledged her faith at the altar to one who, like you, was called—CONINGSBY."

"My mother!"

"You see, I too have had my griefs."

"Dear sir," said Coningsby, rising and taking Mr. Millbank's hand, "I am most wretched; and yet I wish to part from you even with affection. You have explained circumstances that have long perplexed me. A curse, I fear, is on our families. I have not mind enough at this moment even to ponder on my situation. My

head is a chaos. I go; yes, I quit this Hellingsley, where I came to be so happy, where I have been so happy. Nay, let me go, dear sir! I must be alone, I must try to think. And tell her—no, tell her nothing. God will guard over us!"

Proceeding down the avenue with a rapid and distempered step, his countenance lost as it were in a wild abstraction, Coningsby encountered Oswald Millbank. He stopped, collected his turbulent thoughts, and throwing on Oswald one look that seemed at the same time to communicate woe and to demand sympathy, flung himself into his arms.

"My friend!" he exclaimed, and then added, in a broken voice, "I need a friend."

Then in a hurried, impassioned, and somewhat incoherent strain, leaning on Oswald's arm, as they walked on together, he poured forth all that had occurred, all of which he had dreamed; his baffled bliss, his actual despair. Alas! there was little room for solace, and yet all that earnest affection could inspire, and a sagacious brain and a brave spirit were offered for his support, if not his consolation, by the friend who was devoted to him.

In the midst of this deep communion, teeming with every thought and sentiment that could enchain and absorb the spirit of man, they came to one of the park-gates of Coningsby. Millbank stopped. The command of his father was peremptory, that no member of his family, under any circumstances or for any consideration, should set his foot on that domain. Lady Wallinger had once wished to have seen the Castle, and Coningsby was only too happy in the prospect of escorting her and Edith over the place; but Oswald had then at once put his veto on the project, as a thing forbidden; and which, if put in practice, his father would never pardon. So it passed off, and now Oswald himself was at the gates of that very domain with his friend who was about to enter them, his friend whom he might never see again; that Coningsby who, from their boyish days, had been the idol of his life: whom he had lived to see appeal to his affections and his sympathy, and whom Oswald was now going to desert in the midst of his lonely and unsolaced woe.

"I ought not to enter here," said Oswald, holding the hand of Coningsby as he hesitated to advance; "and yet there are duties more sacred even than obedience to a father. I cannot leave you thus, friend of my best heart!"

The morning passed away in unceasing yet fruitless speculation on the future. One moment something was to happen, the next nothing could occur. Sometimes a beam of hope flashed over the fancy of Coningsby, and jumping up from the turf, on which they were reclining, he seemed to exult in his renovated energies

and then this sanguine paroxysm was succeeded by a fit of depression so dark and dejected, that nothing but the presence of Oswald seemed to prevent Coningsby from flinging himself into the waters of the Darl.

The day was fast declining, and the inevitable moment of separation was at hand. Oswald wished to appear at the dinner-table of Hellingsley, that no suspicion might arise in the mind of his father of his having accompanied Coningsby home. But just as he was beginning to mention the necessity of his departure, a flash of lightning seemed to transfix the heavens. The sky was very dark; though studded here and there with dingy spots. The young men sprang up at the same time.

"We had better get out of these trees," said Oswald.

"We had better get to the Castle," said Coningsby.

A clap of thunder that seemed to make the park quake broke over their heads, followed by some thick drops. The Castle was close at hand; Oswald had avoided entering it; but the impending storm was so menacing, that, hurried on by Coningsby, he could make no resistance; and, in a few minutes, the companions were watching the tempest from the windows of a room in Coningsby Castle.

The forked lightning flashed and scintillated from every quarter of the horizon: the thunder broke over the Castle, as if the keep were rocking with artillery: amid the momentary pauses of the explosion, the rain was heard descending like dissolving waterspouts.

Nor was this one of those transient tempests that often agitate the summer. Time advanced, and its fierceness was little mitigated. Sometimes there was a lull, though the violence of the rain never appeared to diminish; but then, as in some pitched fight between contending hosts, when the fervour of the field seems for a moment to allay, fresh squadrons arrive and renew the hottest strife, so a low moaning wind that was now at intervals faintly heard, bore up a great reserve of electric vapour, that formed as it were into field in the space between the Castle and Hellingsley, and then discharged its violence on that fated district.

Coningsby and Oswald exchanged looks. "You must not think of going home at present, my dear fellow," said the first. "I am sure your father would not be displeased. There is not a being here who even knows you, and if they did—what then?"

The servant entered the room, and inquired whether the gentlemen were ready for dinner.

"By all means; come, my dear Millbank, I feel reckless as the tempest. let as drown our cares in wine!"

Coningsby, in fact, was exhausted by all the agitation of the

day, and all the harassing spectres of the future. He found wine a momentary solace. He ordered the servants away, and for a moment felt a degree of wild satisfaction in the company of the brother of Edith.

Thus they sat for a long time, talking only of one subject, and repeating almost the same things, yet both felt happier in being together. Oswald had risen, and opening the window, examined the approaching night. The storm had lulled, though the rain still fell; in the west was a streak of light. In a quarter of an hour, he calculated on departing. As he was watching the wind, he thought he heard the sound of wheels, which reminded him of Coningsby's promise to lend him a light carriage for his return.

They sat down once more; they had filled their glasses for the last time; to pledge to their faithful friendship, and the happiness of Coningsby and Edith; when the door of the room opened, and there appeared—Mr. RIGBY!

END OF BOOK VII.

BOOK VIII.

CHAPTER I.

It was the heart of the London season, nearly four years ago—twelve months having almost elapsed since the occurrence of those painful passages at Hellingsley which closed the last book of this history—and long lines of carriages an hour before midnight, up the classic mount of St. James and along Piccadilly, intimated that the world were received at some grand entertainment in Arlington Street.

It was the town mansion of the noble family beneath whose roof at Beaumanoir we have more than once introduced the reader, to gain whose courtyard was at this moment the object of emulous coachmen, and to enter whose saloons was to reward the martyr-like patience of their lords and ladies.

Among the fortunate who had already succeeded in bowing to their hostess were two gentlemen, who, ensconced in a good position, surveyed the scene, and made their observations on the passing guests. They were gentlemen who, to judge from their general air and the great consideration with which they were treated by those who were occasionally in their vicinity, were personages whose criticism bore authority.

"I say, Jemmy," said the eldest, a dandy who had dined with the Regent, but who was still a dandy, and who enjoyed life almost as much as in the days when Carlton House occupied the terrace which still bears its name—"I say, Jemmy, what a load of young fellows there are! Don't know their names at all. Begin to think fellows are younger than they used to be. Amazing load of young fellows, indeed!"

At this moment an individual who came under the fortunate designation of a young fellow, but whose assured carriage hardly intimated that this was his first season in London, came up to the junior of the two critics, and said, "A pretty turn you played us yesterday at White's, Melton. We waited dinner nearly an hour."

"My dear fellow, I am infinitely sorry; but I was obliged to go down to Windsor, and I missed the return train. A good dinner? Who had you?"

"A capital party, only you were wanted. We had Beaumanoir, and Vere, and Jack Tufton, and Spraggs."

"Was Spraggs rich?"

"Wasn't he! I have not done laughing yet. He told us a story about the little Biron who was over here last year—I knew her at Paris—and an Indian screen. Killing! Get him to tell it you. The richest thing you ever heard!"

"Who's your friend?" inquired Mr. Melton's companion, as the young man moved away.

"Sir Charles Buckhurst."

"A—h! That is Sir Charles Buckhurst. Glad to have seen him. They say he is going it."

"He knows what he is about."

"Egad! so they all do. A young fellow now of two or three and twenty knows the world as men used to do after as many years of scrapes. I wonder where there is such a thing as a green-horn. Effie Crabbs says the reason he gives up his house is, that he has cleaned out the old generation, and that the new generation would clean him."

"Buckhurst is not in that sort of way: he swears by Henry Sydney, a younger son of the duke, whom you don't know; and young Coningsby; a sort of new set; new ideas and all that sort of thing. Beau tells me a good deal about it; and when I was staying with the Everinghams, at Easter, they were full of it. Coningsby had just returned from his travels, and they were quite on the *qui vive*. Lady Everingham is one of their set. I don't know what it is exactly; but I think we shall hear more of it."

"A sort of animal magnetism, or unknown tongues, I take it. from your description," said his companion.

"Well, I don't know what it is," said Mr. Melton; "but it has got hold of all the young fellows who have just come out. Beau is a little bit himself. I had some idea of giving my mind to it, they made such a fuss about it at Everingham, but it requires a devilish deal of history, I believe, and all that sort of thing."

"Ah! that's a bore," said his companion. "It's difficult to turn to with a new thing when you are not in the habit of it. I never could manage charades."

Mr. Ormsby, passing by, stopped. "They told me you had the gout, Cassilis?" he said to Mr. Melton's companion.

"So I had; but I have found out a fellow who cures the gout instanter. Tom Needham sent him to me. A German fellow. Pumice-stone pills; sort of a charm, I believe, and all that kind of thing: they say it rubs the gout out of you. I sent him to Luxborough, who was very bad; cured him directly. Luxborough swears by him."

"Luxborough believes in the Millennium," said Mr. Ormsby.

"But here's a new thing that Melton has been telling me of, that all the world is going to believe in," said Mr. Cassilis; "something patronised by Lady Everingham."

"A very good patroness," said Mr. Ormsby.

"Have you heard anything about it?" continued Mr. Cassilis. "Young Coningsby brought it from abroad; didn't you say so, Jemmy?"

"No, no, my dear fellow; it is not at all that sort of thing."

"But they say it requires a deuced deal of history," continued Mr. Cassilis. "One must brush up one's Goldsmith. Canterton used to be the fellow for history at White's. He was always boring one with William the Conqueror, Julius Cæsar, and all that sort of thing."

"I tell you what," said Mr. Ormsby, looking both sly and solemn, "I should not be surprised if, some day or another, we have a history about Lady Everingham and young Coningsby."

"Poh!" said Mr. Melton; "he is engaged to be married to her sister, Lady Theresa."

"The deuce!" said Mr. Ormsby; "well, you are a friend of the family, and I suppose you know."

"He is a devilish good-looking fellow, that young Coningsby," said Mr. Cassilis. "All the women are in love with him, they say. Lady Eleanor Ducie quite raves about him."

"By the bye, his grandfather has been very unwell," said Mr. Ormsby, looking mysteriously.

"I saw Lady Monmouth here just now," said Mr. Melton.

"Oh! he is quite well again," said Mr. Ormsby.

"Got an odd story at White's that Lord Monmouth was going to separate from her," said Mr. Cassilis.

"No foundation," said Mr. Ormsby, shaking his head.

"They are not going to separate, I believe," said Mr. Melton; "but I rather think there was a foundation for the rumour."

Mr. Ormsby still shook his head.

"Well," continued Mr. Melton, "all I know is, that it was looked upon last winter at Paris as a settled thing."

"There was some story about some Hungarian," said Mr. Cassilis.

"No, that blew over," said Mr. Melton; "it was Trautsmansdorff the row was about.

All this time Mr. Ormsby, as the friend of Lord and Lady Monmouth, remained shaking his head; but as a member of society, and therefore delighting in small scandal, appropriating the gossip with the greatest avidity.

"I should think old Monmouth was not the sort of fellow to blow up a woman," said Mr. Cassilis.

"Provided she would leave him quietly," said Mr. Melton.

"Yes, Lord Monmouth never could live with a woman more than two years," said Mr. Ormsby, pensively. "And that I thought at the time rather an objection to his marriage."

We must now briefly revert to what befel our hero after those unhappy occurrences in the midst of whose first woe we left him.

The day after the arrival of Mr. Rigby at the castle, Coningsby quitted it for London; and before a week had elapsed had embarked for Cadiz. He felt a romantic interest in visiting the land to which Edith owed some blood, and in acquiring the language which he had often admired as she spoke it. A favourable opportunity permitted him in the autumn to visit Athens and the Ægean, which he much desired. In the pensive beauties of that delicate land, where perpetual autumn seems to reign, Coningsby found solace. There is something in the character of Grecian scenery which blends with the humour of the melancholy, and the feelings of the sorrowful Coningsby passed his winter at Rome. The wish of his grandfather had rendered it necessary for him to return to England somewhat abruptly. Lord Monmouth had not visited his native country since his marriage; but the period that had elapsed since that event had considerably improved the prospects of his party. The majority of the Whig Cabinet in the House of Commons by 1840 had become little more than nominal; and though it was circulated among their friends, as if from the highest authority, that "one was enough," there seemed daily a better chance of their being deprived even of that magical unit. For the first time in the history of this country since the introduction of the system of parliamentary sovereignty, the Government of England depended on the fate of single elections; and, indeed, by a single vote, it is remarkable to observe, the fate of the Whig Government was ultimately decided.

This critical state of affairs, duly reported to Lord Monmouth, revived his political passions, and offered him that excitement which he was ever seeking, and yet for which he had often sighed. The marquis, too, was weary of Paris. Every day he found it more difficult to be amused. Lucretia had lost her charm. He, from whom nothing could be concealed, perceived that often, while she elaborately attempted to divert him, her mind was wandering elsewhere. Lord Monmouth was quite superior to all petty jealousy and the vulgar feelings of inferior mortals, but his sublime selfishness required devotion. He had calculated that a wife or a mistress who might be in love with another man, however powerfully their interests might prompt them, could not be so agreeable or amusing to their friends and husbands, as if they had no such distracting hold upon their hearts or their fancy. Latterly at Paris,

while Lucretia became each day more involved in the vortex of society, where all admired and some adored her, Lord Monmouth fell into the easy habit of dining in his private rooms, sometimes tête-à-tête with Villebecque, whose inexhaustible tales and adventures about a kind of society which Lord Monmouth had always preferred infinitely to the polished and somewhat insipid circles in which he was born, had rendered him the prime favourite of his great patron. Sometimes Villebecque, too, brought a friend, male or otherwise, whom he thought invested with the rare faculty of distraction; Lord Monmouth cared not who or what they were, provided they were diverting.

Villebecque had written to Coningsby at Rome, by his grandfather's desire, to beg him to return to England and meet Lord Monmouth there. The letter was couched with all the respect and good feeling which Villebecque really entertained for him whom he addressed; still a letter on such a subject from such a person was not agreeable to Coningsby, and his reply to it was direct to his grandfather; Lord Monmouth, however, had entirely given over writing letters.

Coningsby had met at Paris, on his way to England, Lord and Lady Everingham, and he had returned with them. This revival of an old acquaintance was both agreeable and fortunate for our hero. The vivacity of a clever and charming woman pleasantly disturbed the brooding memory of Coningsby. There is no mortification however keen, no misery however desperate, which the spirit of woman cannot in some degree lighten or alleviate. About, too, to make his formal entrance into the great world, he could not have secured a more valuable and accomplished female friend She gave him every instruction, every intimation that was necessary; cleared the social difficulties which in some degree are experienced on their entrance into the world even by the most highly connected, unless they have this benign assistance; planted him immediately in the position which was expedient; took care that he was invited at once to the right houses; and, with the aid of her husband, that he should become a member of the right clubs.

"And who is to have the blue ribbon, Lord Eskdale?" said the duchess to that nobleman, as he entered and approached to pay his respects.

"If I were Melbourne, I would keep it open," replied his lordship. "It is a mistake to give away too quickly."

"But suppose they go out," said her grace.

"Oh! there is always a last day to clear the house. But they will be in another year. The cliff will not be sapped before then. We made a mistake last year about the ladies."

"I know you always thought so."

"Quarrels about women are always a mistake. One should make it a rule to give up to them, and then they are sure to give up to us."

"You have no great faith in our firmness?"

"Male firmness is very often obstinacy; women have always something better, worth all qualities—they have tact."

"A compliment to the sex from so finished a critic as Lord Eskdale is appreciated."

But at this moment the arrival of some guests terminated the conversation, and Lord Eskdale moved away, and approached a group which Lady Everingham was enlightening.

"My dear Lord Fitz-booby," her ladyship observed, "in politics we require faith as well as in all other things."

Lord Fitz-booby looked rather perplexed; but, possessed of considerable official experience, having held very high posts, some in the cabinet, for nearly a quarter of a century, he was too versed to acknowledge that he had not understood a single word that had been addressed to him for the last ten minutes. He looked on with the same grave, attentive stolidity, occasionally nodding his head, as he was wont of yore when he received a deputation on sugar duties or joint-stock banks, and when he made, as was his custom when particularly perplexed, an occasional note on a sheet of foolscap paper.

"An Opposition in an age of revolution," continued Lady Everingham, "must be founded on principles. It cannot depend on mere personal ability and party address taking advantage of circumstances. You have not enunciated a principle for the last ten years; and when you seemed on the point of acceding to power, it was not on a great question of national interest, but a technical dispute respecting the constitution of an exhausted sugar colony."

"If you are a Conservative party, we wish to know what you want to conserve?" said Lord Vere.

"If it had not been for the Whig abolition of slavery," said Lord Fitz-booby, goaded into repartee, "Jamaica would not have been an exhausted sugar colony."

"Then what you do want to conserve is slavery," said Lord Vere.

"No," said Lord Fitz-booby, "I am never for retracing our steps.'

"But will you advance, will you move? And where will you advance, and how will you move?" said Lady Everingham.

"I think we have had quite enough of advancing," said his lordship. "I had no idea your ladyship was a member of the Movement party," he added, with a sarcastic grin.

"But if it were bad, Lord Fitz-booby, to move where we are, as you and your friends have always maintained, how can you reconcile it to principle to remain there?" said Lord Vere.

"I would make the best of a bad bargain," said Lord Fitz-booby. "With a Conservative government, a reformed Constitution would be less dangerous."

"Why?" said Lady Everingham. "What are your distinctive principles that render the peril less?"

"I appeal to Lord Eskdale," said Lord Fitz-booby; "there is Lady Everingham turned quite a Radical, I declare. Is not your Lordship of opinion that the country must be safer with a Conservative government than with a Liberal?"

"I think the country is always tolerably secure," said Lord Eskdale.

Lady Theresa, leaning on the arm of Mr. Lyle, came up at this moment, and unconsciously made a diversion in favour of Lord Fitz-booby.

"Pray, Theresa," said Lady Everingham, "where is Mr. Coningsby?"

Let us endeavour to ascertain It so happened that on this day Coningsby and Henry Sydney dined at Grillion's, at an university club, where, among many friends whom Coningsby had not met for a long time, and among delightful reminiscences, the unconscious hours stole on. It was late when they quitted Grillion's, and Coningsby's brougham was detained for a considerable time before its driver could insinuate himself into the line, which indeed he would never have succeeded in doing, had not he fortunately come across the coachman of the Duke of Agincourt, who being of the same politics as himself, belonging to the same club, and always black-balling the same men, let him in from a legitimate party feeling; so they arrived in Arlington Street at a very late hour.

Coningsby was springing up the staircase, now not so crowded as it had been, and met a retiring party; he was about to say a passing word to a gentleman as he went by, when, suddenly, Coningsby turned deadly pale. The gentleman could hardly be the cause, for it was the gracious and handsome presence of Lord Beaumanoir; the lady resting on his arm was Edith. They moved on while he was motionless; yet Edith and himself had exchanged glances. His was one of astonishment; but what was the expression of hers? She must have recognised him before he had observed her. She was collected, and she expressed the purpose of her mind in a distant and haughty recognition. Coningsby remained for a moment stupified; then suddenly turning back, he bounded down stairs, and hurried into the cloak-room. He met

Lady Wallinger; he spoke rapidly, he held her hand, did not listen to her answers, his eyes wandered about. There were many persons present, at length he recognised Edith enveloped in her mantle. He went forward, he looked at her, as if he would have read her soul; he said something. She changed colour as he addressed her; but seemed instantly by an effort to rally and regain her equanimity; replied to his inquiries with extreme brevity, and Lady Wallinger's carriage being announced, moved away with the same slight haughty salute as before on the arm of Lord Beaumanoir.

CHAPTER II.

Sadness fell over the once happy family of Millbank after the departure of Coningsby from Hellingsley. When the first pang was over, Edith had found some solace in the sympathy of her aunt, who had always appreciated and admired Coningsby; but it was a sympathy which aspired only to soften sorrow, and not to create hope. But Lady Wallinger, though she lengthened her visit for the sake of her niece, in time quitted them; and then the name of Coningsby was never heard by Edith. Her brother, shortly after the sorrowful and abrupt departure of his friend, had gone to the factories where he remained, and of which, in future, it was intended that he should assume the principal direction. Mr. Millbank himself, sustained at first by the society of his friend Sir Joseph, to whom he was attached, and occupied with daily reports from his establishments and the transaction of the affairs of his numerous and busy constituents, was for a while scarcely conscious of the alteration which had taken place in the demeanour of his daughter. But when they were once more alone together, it was impossible any longer to be blind to the great change. That happy and equable gaiety of spirit, which seemed to spring from an innocent enjoyment of existence, and which had ever distinguished Edith, was wanting. Her sunny glance was gone. She was not indeed always moody and dispirited, but she was fitful, unequal in her tone. That temper whose sweetness had been a domestic proverb, had become a little uncertain. Not that her affection for her father was diminished, but there were snatches of unusual irritability which momentarily escaped her, followed by bursts of tenderness that were the creatures of compunction. And often, after some hasty word, she would throw her arms round her father's neck with the fondness of remorse. She pursued her usual avocations, for she had really too well regulated a mind, she was in truth

a person of too strong an intellect, to neglect any source of occupation and distraction. Her flowers, her pencil, and her books supplied her with these; and music soothed, and at times beguiled, her agitated thoughts. But there was no joy in the house, and in time Mr. Millbank felt it.

Mr. Millbank was vexed, irritated, grieved. Edith, his Edith, the pride and delight of his existence, who had been to him only a source of exultation and felicity, was no longer happy, was perhaps pining away; and there was the appearance, the unjust appearance that he, her fond father, was the cause and occasion of all this wretchedness. It would appear that the name of Coningsby, to which he now owed a great debt of gratitude, was still doomed to bear him mortification and misery. Truly had the young man said that there was a curse upon their two families. And yet, on reflection, it still seemed to Mr. Millbank that he had acted with as much wisdom and real kindness as decision. How otherwise was he to have acted? The union was impossible; the speedier their separation, therefore, clearly the better. Unfortunate, indeed, had been his absence from Hellingsley; unquestionably his presence might have prevented the catastrophe. Oswald should have hindered all this. And yet Mr. Millbank could not shut his eyes to the devotion of his son to Coningsby. He felt he could count on no assistance in this respect from that quarter. Yet how hard upon him that he should seem to figure as a despot or a tyrant to his own children whom he loved, when he had absolutely acted in an inevitable manner! Edith seemed sad, Oswald sullen; all was changed. All the objects for which this clear-headed, strong-minded, kind-hearted man had been working all his life, seemed to be frustrated. And why? Because a young man had made love to his daughter, who was really in no manner entitled to do so.

As the autumn drew on, Mr. Millbank found Hellingsley, under existing circumstances, extremely wearisome; and he proposed to his daughter that they should pay a visit to their earlier home. Edith assented without difficulty, but without interest. And yet, as Mr. Millbank immediately perceived, the change was a very judicious one; for certainly the spirits of Edith seemed to improve very soon after her return to their valley. There were more objects of interest: change, too, is always beneficial. If Mr. Millbank had been aware that Oswald had received a letter from Coningsby, written before he quitted Spain, perhaps he might have recognised a more satisfactory reason for the transient liveliness of his daughter which had so greatly gratified him.

About a month after Christmas, the meeting of Parliament summoned Mr. Millbank up to London; and he had wished Edith

to accompany him. But London in February to Edith, without friends or connexions, her father always occupied and absent from her day and night, seemed to them all, on reflection, to be a life not very conducive to health or cheerfulness, and therefore she remained with her brother. Oswald had heard from Coningsby again from Rome; but at the period he wrote he did not anticipate his return to England. His tone was affectionate, but dispirited.

Lady Wallinger went up to London after Easter for the season, and Mr. Millbank, now that there was a constant companion for his daughter, took a house and carried Edith back with him to London. Lady Wallinger, who had great wealth and great tact, had obtained by degrees a not inconsiderable position in society. She had a very fine house in a very fashionable situation, and gave profuse entertainments. The Whigs were under great obligations to her husband, and the great Whig ladies were gratified to find in his wife a polished and pleasing person, to whom they could be very courteous without any annoyance. So that Edith, under the auspices of her aunt, found herself at once in circles which otherwise she might not easily have entered, but which her beauty, grace, and experience of the most refined society of the Continent, qualified her to shine in. One evening they met the Marquis of Beaumanoir, their friend of Rome and Paris, and admirer of Edith, who from that time was seldom from their side. His mother, the Duchess, immediately called both on the Millbanks and the Wallingers; glad, not only to please her son, but to express that consideration for Mr. Millbank which the Duke always wished to shew. It was, however, of no use; nothing would induce Mr. Millbank ever to enter what he called aristocratic society. He liked the House of Commons; never paired off; never missed a moment of it; worked at committees all the morning, listened attentively to debates all the night; always dined at Bellamy's when there was a house; and when there was not, liked dining at the Goldsmiths' Company, the Russia Company, great Emigration banquets, and other joint-stock festivities. That was his idea of rational society; business and pleasure combined; a good dinner, and good speeches afterwards.

Edith was aware that Coningsby had returned to England, for her brother had heard from him on his arrival; but Oswald had not heard since. A season in London only represented in the mind of Edith the chance, perhaps the certainty, of meeting Coningsby again; of communing together over the catastrophe of last summer; of soothing and solacing each other's unhappiness, and perhaps, with the sanguine imagination of youth, foreseeing a more felicitous future. She had been nearly a fortnight in town, and though

moving frequently in the same circles as Coningsby, they had not yet met. It was one of those results which could rarely occur; but even chance enters too frequently in the league against lovers. The invitation to the assembly at —— House was therefore peculiarly gratifying to Edith, since she could scarcely doubt that if Coningsby were in town, which her casual inquiries of Lord Beaumanoir induced her to believe was the case, he would be present. Never, therefore, had she repaired to an assembly with such a fluttering spirit; and yet there was a fascinating anxiety about it that bewilders the young heart.

In vain Edith surveyed the rooms to catch the form of that being, whom for a moment she had never ceased to cherish and muse over. He was not there; and at the very moment when, disappointed and mortified, she most required solace, she learned from Mr. Melton that Lady Theresa Sydney, whom she chanced to admire, was going to be married, and to Mr. Coningsby!

What a revelation! His silence, perhaps his shunning of her, were no longer inexplicable. What a return for all her romantic devotion in her sad solitude at Hellingsley; Was this the end of their twilight rambles, and the sweet pathos of their mutual loves? There seemed to be no truth in man, no joy in life! All the feelings that she had so generously lavished, all returned upon herself. She could have burst into a passion of tears and buried herself in a cloister.

Instead of that, civilisation made her listen with a serene though tortured countenance; but as soon as it was in her power, pleading a head-ache to Lady Wallinger, she effected, or thought she had effected, her escape from a scene which harrowed her heart.

As for Coningsby, he passed a sleepless night; agitated by the unexpected presence of Edith and abstracted by the manner in which she had received him. To say that her appearance had revived all his passionate affection for her would convey an unjust impression of the nature of his feelings. His affection had never for a moment swerved; it was profound and firm. But unquestionably this sudden vision had brought before him, in startling and more vivid colours, the relations that subsisted between them. There was the being whom he loved and who loved him; and whatever were the barriers which the circumstances of life placed against their union, they were partakers of the solemn sacrament of an unpolluted heart.

Coningsby, as we have mentioned, had signified to Oswald his return to England: he had hitherto omitted to write again; not because his spirit faltered, but he was wearied of whispering hope without foundation, and mourning over his chagrined fortunes.

Once more in England, once more placed in communication with his grandfather, he felt with increased conviction the difficulties which surrounded him. The society of Lady Everingham and her sister, who had been at the same time her visitor, had been a relaxation, and a beneficial one, to a mind suffering too much from the tension of one idea. But Coningsby had treated the matrimonial project of his gay-minded hostess with the courteous levity in which he believed it had at first half originated. He admired and liked Lady Theresa; but there was a reason why he could not marry her, even had his own heart not been absorbed by one of those passions from which men of deep and earnest character never emancipate themselves.

After musing and meditating again and again over everything that had occurred, Coningsby fell asleep when the morning had far advanced, resolved to rise when a little refreshed and find out Lady Wallinger, who, he felt sure, would receive him with kindness.

Yet it was fated that this step should not be taken, for while he was at breakfast his servant brought him a letter from Monmouth House, apprising him that his grandfather wished to see him as soon as possible on urgent business.

CHAPTER III.

Lord Monmouth was sitting in the same dressing-room in which he was first introduced to the reader; on the table were several packets of papers that were open and in course of reference; and he dictated his observations to Monsieur Villebecque, who was writing at his left hand.

Thus were they occupied when Coningsby was ushered into the room.

"You see, Harry," said Lord Monmouth, "that I am much occupied to-day, yet the business on which I wish to communicate with you is so pressing that it could not be postponed." He made a sign to Villebecque, and his secretary instantly retired.

"I was right in pressing your return to England," continued Lord Monmouth to his grandson, who was a little anxious as to the impending communication, which he could not in any way anticipate. "These are not times when young men should be out of sight. Your public career will commence immediately. The Government have resolved on a dissolution. My information is from the highest quarter. You may be astonished, but it is a fact.

They are going to dissolve their own House of Commons. Notwithstanding this and the Queen's name, we can beat them; but the race requires the finest jockeying. We can't give a point. Tadpole has been here to me about Darlford; he came specially with a message, I may say an appeal, from one to whom I can refuse nothing; the Government count on the seat, though with the new Registration 'tis nearly a tie. If we had a good candidate we could win. But Rigby won't do. He is too much of the old clique; used up; a hack; besides, a beaten horse. We are assured the name of Coningsby would be a host; there is a considerable section who support the present fellow who will not vote against a Coningsby. They have thought of you as a fit person, and I have approved of the suggestion. You will, therefore, be the candidate for Darlford with my entire sanction and support, and I have no doubt you will be successful. You may be sure I shall spare nothing: and it will be very gratifying to me, after being robbed of all our boroughs, that the only Coningsby who cares to enter Parliament, should nevertheless be able to do so as early as I could fairly desire."

Coningsby the rival of Mr. Millbank on the hustings of Darlford! Vanquished or victorious, equally a catastrophe! The fierce passions, the gross insults, the hot blood and the cool lies, the ruffianism and the ribaldry, perhaps the domestic discomfiture and mortification, which he was about to be the means of bringing on the roof he loved best in the world, occurred to him with anguish. The countenance of Edith, haughty and mournful as last night, rose to him again. He saw her canvassing for her father, and against him. Madness! And for what was he to make this terrible and costly sacrifice? For his ambition? Not even for that Divinity or Dæmon for which we all immolate so much! Mighty ambition, forsooth, to succeed to the Rigbys! To enter the House of Commons a slave and a tool; to move according to instructions, and to labour for the low designs of petty spirits, without even the consolation of being a dupe. What sympathy could there exist between Coningsby and the "great Conservative party," that for ten years in an age of revolution had never promulgated a principle; whose only intelligible and consistent policy seemed to be an attempt, very grateful of course to the feelings of an English Royalist, to revive Irish Puritanism; who when in power in 1835 had used that power only to evince their utter ignorance of Church principles; and who were at this moment, when Coningsby was formally solicited to join their ranks, in open insurrection against the prerogatives of the English Monarchy?

"Do you anticipate then an immediate dissolution, sir?" inquired Coningsby after a moment's pause.

"We must anticipate it; though I think it doubtful. It may be next month; it may be in the autumn; they may tide over another year, as Lord Eskdale thinks, and his opinion always weighs with me. He is very safe. Tadpole believes they will dissolve at once. But whether they dissolve now, or in a month's time, or in the autumn, or next year, our course is clear. We must declare our intentions immediately. We must hoist our flag. Monday next, there is a great Conservative dinner at Darlford. You must attend it; that will be the finest opportunity in the world for you to announce yourself."

"Don't you think, sir," said Coningsby, "that such an announcement would be rather premature? It is, in fact, embarking in a contest which may last a year; perhaps more."

"What you say is very true," said Lord Monmouth; "no doubt it is very troublesome; very disgusting; any canvassing is. But we must take things as we find them. You cannot get into Parliament now in the good old gentlemanlike way; and we ought to be thankful that this interest has been fostered for our purpose"

Coningsby looked on the carpet, cleared his throat as if about to speak, and then gave something like a sigh.

"I think you had better be off the day after to-morrow," said Lord Monmouth. "I have sent instructions to the steward to do all he can in so short a time, for I wish you to entertain the principal people."

"You are most kind, you are always most kind to me, dear sir," said Coningsby, in a hesitating tone, and with an air of great embarrassment, "but, in truth, I have no wish to enter Parliament."

"What?" said Lord Monmouth.

"I feel that I am not yet sufficiently prepared for so great a responsibility as a seat in the House of Commons," said Coningsby.

"Responsibility!" said Lord Monmouth, smiling. "What responsibility is there? How can any one have a more agreeable seat? The only person to whom you are responsible is your own relation, who brings you in. And I don't suppose there can be any difference on any point between us. You are certainly still young; but I was younger by nearly two years when I first went in; and I found no difficulty. There can be no difficulty. All you have got to do is to vote with your party. As for speaking, if you have a talent that way, take my advice; don't be in a hurry. Learn to know the House; learn the House to know you. If a man be discreet, he cannot enter Parliament too soon."

"It is not exactly that, sir," said Coningsby.

"Then what is it, my dear Harry? You see to-day I have much to do; yet as your business is pressing, I would not postpone

seeing you an hour. I thought you would have been very much gratified."

"You mentioned that I had nothing to do but to vote with my party, sir," replied Coningsby. "You mean, of course, by that term what is understood by the Conservative party?"

"Of course; our friends."

"I am sorry," said Coningsby, rather pale, but speaking with firmness—"I am sorry that I could not support the Conservative party."

"By —!" exclaimed Lord Monmouth, starting in his chair, "some woman has got hold of him, and made him a Whig!"

"No, my dear grandfather," said Coningsby, scarcely able to repress a smile, serious as the interview was becoming, "nothing of the kind, I assure you. No person can be more anti-Whig."

"I don't know what you are driving at, sir," said Lord Monmouth, in a hard, dry tone.

"I wish to be frank, sir," said Coningsby, "and am very sensible of your goodness in permitting me to speak to you on the subject. What I mean to say is, that I have for a long time looked upon the Conservative party as a body who have betrayed their trust; more from ignorance I admit than from design; yet clearly a body of individuals totally unequal to the exigencies of the epoch, and indeed unconscious of its real character."

"You mean giving up those Irish corporations?" said Lord Monmouth. "Well, between ourselves, I am quite of the same opinion. But we must mount higher; we must go to —28 for the real mischief. But what is the use of lamenting the past? Peel is the only man; suited to the times and all that,—at least we must say so, and try to believe so; we can't go back. And it is our own fault that we have let the chief power out of the hands of our own order. It was never thought of in the time of your great-grandfather, sir. And if a commoner were for a season permitted to be the nominal Premier to do the detail, there was always a secret committee of great 1688 nobles to give him his instructions."

"I should be very sorry to see secret committees of great 1688 nobles again," said Coningsby.

"Then what the devil do you want to see?" said Lord Monmouth.

"Political faith," said Coningsby, "instead of political infidelity."

"Hem!" said Lord Monmouth.

"Before I support Conservative principles," continued Coningsby, "I merely wish to be informed what those principles aim to conserve. It would not appear to be the prerogative of the Crown, since the principal portion of a Conservative oration now is an invective against a late royal act which they describe as a Bed-

chamber plot. Is it the Church which they wish to conserve? What is a threatened Appropriation Clause against an actual Church Commission in the hands of Parliamentary Laymen? Could the Long Parliament have done worse? Well, then, if it's neither the Crown nor the Church, whose rights and privileges this Conservative party propose to vindicate, is it your House, the House of Lords, whose powers they are prepared to uphold? Is it not notorious that the very man whom you have elected as your leader in that House, declares among his Conservative adherents, that henceforth the assembly that used to furnish those very Committees of great revolution nobles that you mention, is to initiate nothing; and, without a struggle, is to subside into that undisturbed repose which resembles the Imperial tranquillity that secured the frontiers by paying tribute?"

"All this is vastly fine," said Lord Monmouth; "but I see no means by which I can attain my object but by supporting Peel. After all, what is the end of all parties and all politics? To gain your object. I want to turn our coronet into a ducal one, and to get your grandmother's barony called out of abeyance in your favour. It is impossible that Peel can refuse me. I have already purchased an ample estate with the view of entailing it on you and your issue. You will make a considerable alliance; you may marry, if you please, Lady Theresa Sydney. I hear the report with pleasure. Count on me at once entering into any arrangement conducive to your happiness."

"My dear grandfather, you have ever been to me only too kind and generous."

"To whom should I be kind but to you, my own blood, that has never crossed me, and of whom I have reason to be proud? Yes, Harry, it gratifies me to hear you admired and to learn your success. All I want now is to see you in Parliament. A man should be in Parliament early. There is a sort of stiffness about every man, no matter what may be his talents, who enters Parliament late in life; and now, fortunately, the occasion offers. You will go down on Friday; feed the notabilities well; speak out; praise Peel; abuse O'Connell and the ladies of the Bed-chamber; anathematise all waverers; say a good deal about Ireland; stick to the Irish Registration Bill—that's a good card; and, above all, my dear Harry, don't spare that fellow Millbank. Remember, in turning him out you not only gain a vote for the Conservative cause and our coronet, but you crush my foe. Spare *nothing* for that object; I count on you, boy."

"I should grieve to be backward in anything that concerned your interest or your honour, sir," said Coningsby, with an air of great embarrassment.

"I am sure you would, I am sure you would," said Lord Monmouth, in a tone of some kindness.

"And I feel at this moment," continued Coningsby, "that there is no personal sacrifice which I am not prepared to make for them, except one. My interests, my affections, they should not be placed in the balance, if yours, sir, were at stake, though there are circumstances which might involve me in a position of as much mental distress as a man could well endure; but I claim for my convictions, my dear grandfather, a generous tolerance."

"I can't follow you, sir," said Lord Monmouth, again in his hard tone. "Our interests are inseparable, and therefore there can never be any sacrifice of conduct on your part. What you mean by sacrifice of affections, I don't comprehend; but as for your opinions, you have no business to have any other than those I uphold. You are too young to form opinions."

"I am sure I wish to express them with no unbecoming confidence," replied Coningsby; "I have never intruded them on your ear before; but this being an occasion when you yourself said, sir, I was about to commence my public career, I confess I thought it was my duty to be frank; I would not entail on myself long years of mortification by one of those ill-considered entrances into political life which so many public men have cause to deplore."

"You go with your family, sir, like a gentleman; you are not to consider your opinions, like a philosopher or a political adventurer."

"Yes, sir," said Coningsby, with animation, "but men going with their families like gentlemen, and losing sight of every principle on which the society of this country ought to be established produced the Reform Bill."

"D—— the Reform Bill!" said Lord Monmouth; "if the Duke had not quarrelled with Lord Grey on a Coal Committee, we should never have had the Reform Bill. And Grey would have gone to Ireland."

"You are in as great peril now as you were in 1830," said Coningsby.

"No, no, no," said Lord Monmouth; "the Tory party is organised now; they will not catch us napping again: these Conservative Associations have done the business."

"But what are they organised for?" said Coningsby. "At the best to turn out the Whigs. And when you have turned out the Whigs, what then? You may get your ducal coronet, sir. But a duke now is not as great a man as a baron was but a century back. We cannot struggle against the irresistible stream of circumstances. Power has left our order; this is not an age for factitious aristocracy. As for my grandmother's barony, I should look upon the

termination of its abeyance in my favour as the act of my political extinction. What we want, sir, is not to fashion new dukes and furbish up old baronies, but to establish great principles which may maintain the realm and secure the happiness of the people. Let me see authority once more honoured; a solemn reverence again the habit of our lives; let me see property acknowledging, as in the old days of faith, that labour is his twin brother, and that the essence of all tenure is the performance of duty; let results such as these be brought about, and let me participate, however feebly, in the great fulfilment, and public life then indeed becomes a noble career, and a seat in Parliament an enviable distinction."

"I tell you what it is, Harry," said Lord Monmouth, very drily, "members of this family may think as they like, but they must act as I please. You must go down on Friday to Darlford and declare yourself a candidate for the town, or I shall reconsider our mutual positions. I would say, you must go to-morrow; but it is only courteous to Rigby to give him a previous intimation of your movement. And that cannot be done to-day. I sent for Rigby this morning on other business which now occupies me, and find he is out of town. He will return to-morrow; and will be here at three o'clock, when you can meet him. You will meet him, I doubt not, like a man of sense," added Lord Monmouth, looking at Coningsby with a glance such as he had never before encountered, "who is not prepared to sacrifice all the objects of life for the pursuit of some fantastical puerilities."

His Lordship rang a bell on his table for Villebecque; and to prevent any further conversation, resumed his papers.

CHAPTER IV.

It would have been difficult for any person, unconscious of crime, to have felt more dejected than Coningsby when he rode out of the court-yard of Monmouth House. The love of Edith would have consoled him for the destruction of his prosperity; the proud fulfilment of his ambition might in time have proved some compensation for his crushed affections; but his present position seemed to offer no single source of solace. There came over him that irresistible conviction that is at times the dark doom of all of us, that the bright period of our life is past; that a future awaits us only of anxiety, failure, mortification, despair; that none of our resplendent visions can ever be realised; and that we add but

one more victim to the long and dreary catalogue of baffled aspirations.

Nor could he indeed by any combination see the means to extricate himself from the perils that were encompassing him. There was something about his grandfather that defied persuasion. Prone as eloquent youth generally is to believe in the resistless power of its appeals, Coningsby despaired at once of ever moving Lord Monmouth. There had been a callous dryness in his manner, an unswerving purpose in his spirit, that at once baffled all attempts at influence. Nor could Coningsby forget the look he received when he quitted the room. There was no possibility of mistaking it; it said at once, without periphrasis, "Cross my purpose, and I will crush you!"

This was the moment when the sympathy, if not the counsels, of friendship might have been grateful. A clever woman might have afforded even more than sympathy; some happy device that might have even released him from the mesh in which he was involved. And once Coningsby had turned his horse's head to Park Lane, to call on Lady Everingham. But surely if there were a sacred secret in the world, it was the one which subsisted between himself and Edith. No, that must never be violated. Then there was Lady Wallinger; he could at least speak with freedom to her. He resolved to tell her all. He looked in for a moment at a club to take up the Court Guide and find her direction. A few men were standing in a bow window. He heard Mr. Cassilis say—

"So Beau, they say, is booked at last; the new beauty, have you heard?"

"I saw him very sweet on her last night," rejoined his companion. "Has she any tin?"

"Deuced deal, they say," replied Mr. Cassilis. "The father's a cotton lord, and they all have loads of tin, you know. Nothing like them now."

"He is in Parliament—is not he?"

"Gad, I believe he is," said Mr. Cassilis; "I never know who is in Parliament in these days. I remember when there were only ten men in the House of Commons who were not either members of Brookes' or this place. Everything is so deuced changed."

"I hear 'tis an old affair of Beau," said another gentleman. "It was all done a year ago at Rome or Paris."

"They say she refused him then," said Mr. Cassilis.

"Well, that is tolerably cool for a manufacturer's daughter," said his friend. "What next?"

"I wonder how the duke likes it?" said Mr. Cassilis.

"Or the duchess?" added one of his friends.

"Or the Everinghams?" added the other.

"The duke will be deuced glad to see Beau settled, I take it," said Mr. Cassilis.

"A good deal depends on the tin," said his friend.

Coningsby threw down "The Court Guide" with a sinking heart. In spite of every insuperable difficulty, hitherto the end and object of all his aspirations and all his exploits, sometimes even almost unconsciously to himself, was Edith. It was over. The strange manner of last night was fatally explained. The heart that once had been his was now another's. To the man who still loves there is in that conviction the most profound and desolate sorrow of which our nature is capable. All the recollection of the past, all the once-cherished prospects of the future blend into one bewildering anguish. Coningsby quitted the club, and mounting his horse, rode rapidly out of town, almost unconscious of his direction. He found himself at length in a green lane near Willesden, silent and undisturbed; he pulled up his horse, and summoned all his mind to the contemplation of his prospects.

Edith was lost. Now, should he return to his grandfather, accept his mission, and go down to Darlford on Friday? Favour and fortune, power, prosperity, rank, distinction, would be the consequence of this step; might not he add even vengeance? Was there to be no term to his endurance? Might not he teach this proud, prejudiced manufacturer, with all his virulence and despotic caprices, a memorable lesson? And his daughter, too, this betrothed, after all, of a young noble, with her flush futurity of splendour and enjoyment, was she to hear of him only, if indeed she heard of him at all, as of one toiling or trifling in the humbler positions of existence; and wonder, with a blush, that he ever could have been the hero of her romantic girlhood? What degradation in the idea? His cheek burnt at the possibility of such ignominy!

It was a conjuncture in his life that required decision. He thought of his companions who looked up to him with such ardent anticipations of his fame, of delight in his career, and confidence in his leading; were all these high and fond fancies to be baulked? On the very threshold of life was he to blunder? 'Tis the first step that leads to all, and his was to be a wilful error. He remembered his first visit to his grandfather, and the delight of his friends at Eton at his report on his return. After eight years of initiation was he to lose that favour then so highly prized, when the results which they had so long counted on were on the very eve of accomplishment? Parliament and riches, and rank and power—these were facts, realities, substances, that none could mistake. Was he to sacrifice them for speculations, theories, shadows, perhaps the vapours of a green and conceited brain? No, by heaven

no! he was like Cæsar by the starry river's side, watching the image of the planets on its fatal waters. The die was cast.

The sun set; the twilight spell fell upon his soul; the exaltation of his spirit died away. Beautiful thoughts, full of sweetness and tranquillity and consolation, came clustering round his heart like seraphs. He thought of Edith in her hours of fondness; he thought of the pure and solemn moments when to mingle his name with the heroes of humanity was his aspiration, and to achieve immortal fame the inspiring purpose of his life. What were the tawdry accidents of vulgar ambition to him? No domestic despot could deprive him of his intellect, his knowledge, the sustaining power of an unpolluted conscience. If he possessed the intelligence in which he had confidence, the world would recognise his voice even if not placed upon a pedestal. If the principles of his philosophy were true, the great heart of the nation would respond to their expression. Coningsby felt at this moment a profound conviction which never again deserted him, that the conduct which would violate the affections of the heart or the dictates of the conscience, however it may lead to immediate success, is a fatal error. Conscious that he was perhaps verging on some painful vicissitude of his life, he devoted himself to a love that seemed hopeless, and to a fame that was perhaps a dream.

It was under the influence of these solemn resolutions that he wrote, on his return home, a letter to Lord Monmouth, in which he expressed all that affection which he really felt for his grandfather, and all the pangs which it cost him to adhere to the conclusions he had already announced. In terms of tenderness, and even humility, he declined to become a candidate for Darlford, or even to enter Parliament, except as the master of his own conduct.

CHAPTER V.

Lady Monmouth was reclining on a sofa in that beautiful boudoir which had been fitted up under the superintendence of Mr. Rigby, but as he then believed for the Princess Colonna. The walls were hung with amber satin, painted by Delaroche with such subjects as might be expected from his brilliant and picturesque pencil. Fair forms, heroes and heroines in dazzling costume, the offspring of chivalry merging into what is commonly styled civilisation, moved in graceful or fantastic groups amid palaces and gardens. The ceiling, carved in the deep honeycomb fashion of the Saracens, was richly gilt and picked out in violet Upon a violet carpet of velvet was represented the marriage of Cupid and Psyche.

It was about two hours after Coningsby had quitted Monmouth House, and Flora came in, sent for by Lady Monmouth, as was her custom, to read to her as she was employed with some light work.

"'Tis a new book of Sue," said Lucretia. "They say it is good."

Flora, seated by her side, began to read. Reading was an accomplishment which distinguished Flora; but to-day her voice faltered, her expression was uncertain; she seemed but very imperfectly to comprehend her page. More than once Lady Monmouth looked round at her with an inquisitive glance. Suddenly Flora stopped and burst into tears.

"Oh! madam," she at last exclaimed, "if you would but speak to Mr. Coningsby, all might be right!"

"What is this?" said Lady Monmouth, turning quickly on the sofa; then, collecting herself in an instant, she continued with less abruptness, and more suavity than usual, "Tell me, Flora, what is it; what is the matter?"

"My lord," sobbed Flora, "has quarrelled with Mr Coningsby."

An expression of eager interest came over the countenance of Lucretia.

"Why have they quarrelled?"

"I do not know they have quarrelled; it is not perhaps a right term; but my lord is very angry with Mr. Coningsby."

"Not very angry, I should think, Flora; and about what?"

"Oh! very angry, madam," said Flora, shaking her head mournfully. "My lord told M. Villebecque that perhaps Mr. Coningsby would never enter the house again."

"Was it to-day?" asked Lucretia.

"This morning. Mr. Coningsby has only left this hour or two. He will not do what my lord wishes—about some seat in the Chamber. I do not know exactly what it is; but my lord is in one of his moods of terror; my father is frightened even to go into his room when he is so."

"Has Mr. Rigby been here to-day?" asked Lucretia.

"Mr. Rigby is not in town. My father went for Mr. Rigby this morning before Mr. Coningsby came, and he found that Mr. Rigby was not in town. That is why I know it."

Lady Monmouth rose from her sofa, and walked once or twice up and down the room. Then turning to Flora, she said, "Go away now; the book is stupid; it does not amuse me. Stop: find out all you can for me about the quarrel before I speak to Mr. Coningsby."

Flora quitted the room. Lucretia remained for some time in meditation: then she wrote a few lines which she despatched at once to Mr. Rigby.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT a great man was the Right Honourable Nicholas Rigby! Here was one of the first peers of England, and one of the finest ladies in London, both waiting with equal anxiety his return to town; and unable to transact two affairs of vast importance, yet wholly unconnected, without his interposition! What was the secret of the influence of this man, confided in by everybody, trusted by none? His counsels were not deep, his expedients were not felicitous; he had no feeling, and he could create no sympathy. It is, that in most of the transactions of life there is some portion which no one cares to accomplish, and which everybody wishes to be achieved. This was always the portion of Mr. Rigby. In the eye of the world he had constantly the appearance of being mixed up with high dealings, and negotiations and arrangements of fine management, whereas in truth, notwithstanding his splendid livery and the airs he gave himself in the servants' hall, his real business in life had ever been—to do the dirty work.

Mr. Rigby had been shut up much at his villa of late. He was concocting—you could not term it composing—an article, a "very slashing article," which was to prove that the penny postage must be the destruction of the aristocracy. It was a grand subject treated in his highest style. His parallel portraits of Rowland Hill the conqueror of Almarez and Rowland Hill the deviser of the cheap postage was enormously fine. It was full of passages in italics, little words in great capitals, and almost drew tears. The statistical details also were highly interesting and novel. Several of the old postmen, both twopenny and general, who had been in office with himself, and who were inspired with an equal zeal against that spirit of reform of which they had alike been victims, supplied him with information which nothing but a breach of ministerial duty could have furnished. The prophetic peroration as to the irresistible progress of democracy was almost as powerful as one of Rigby's speeches on Aldborough or Amersham. There never was a fellow for giving a good hearty kick to the people like Rigby. Himself sprung from the dregs of the populace, this was disinterested. What could be more patriotic and magnanimous than his Jeremiads over the fall of the Montmorencis and the Crillons, or the possible catastrophe of the Percys and the Manners! The truth of all this hullaballoo was that Rigby had a sly pension which, by an inevitable association of ideas, he always connected with the maintenance of an aristocracy. All his rig-

marole dissertations on the French revolution were impelled by this secret influence; and when he wailed over "la guerre aux châteaux," and moaned like a mandrake over Nottingham Castle in flames, the rogue had an eye all the while to quarter-day!

Arriving in town the day after Coningsby's interview with his grandfather, Mr. Rigby found a summons to Monmouth House waiting him, and an urgent note from Lucretia begging that he would permit nothing to prevent him seeing her for a few minutes before he called on the marquess.

Lucretia, acting on the unconscious intimation of Flora, had in the course of four-and-twenty hours obtained pretty ample and accurate details of the cause of contention between Coningsby and her husband. She could inform Mr. Rigby not only that Lord Monmouth was highly incensed against his grandson, but that the cause of their misunderstanding arose about a seat in the House of Commons, and that seat too the one which Mr. Rigby had long appropriated to himself, and over whose registration he had watched with such affectionate solicitude.

Lady Monmouth arranged this information like a first-rate artist, and gave it a grouping and a colour which produced the liveliest effect upon her confederate. The countenance of Rigby was almost ghastly as he received the intelligence; a grin, half of malice, half of terror, played over his features.

"I told you to beware of him long ago," said Lady Monmouth. "He is, he has ever been, in the way of both of us."

"He is in my power," said Rigby. "We can crush him!"

"How?"

"He is in love with the daughter of Millbank, the man who bought Hellingsley."

"Hah!" exclaimed Lady Monmouth, in a prolonged tone.

"He was at Coningsby all last summer hanging about her. I found the younger Millbank quite domiciliated at the castle; a fact which, of itself, if known to Lord Monmouth, would ensure the lad's annihilation."

"And you kept this fine news for a winter campaign, my good Mr. Rigby," said Lady Monmouth, with a subtle smile. "It was a weapon of service. I give you my compliments."

"The time is not always ripe," said Mr. Rigby.

"But it is now almost mature; let us not conceal it from ourselves that, since his first visit to Coningsby, we have neither of us really been in the same position which we then occupied, or believed we should occupy. My lord, though you would scarcely believe it, has a weakness for this boy; and though I by my marriage, and you by your zealous ability, have apparently secured a permanent hold upon his habits, I have never doubted that when

the crisis comes we shall find that the golden fruit is plucked by one who has not watched the garden. You take me? There is no reason why we two should clash together: we can both of us find what we want, and more securely if we work in company."

"I trust my devotion to you has never been doubted, dear madam."

"Nor to yourself, dear Mr. Rigby. Go now; the game is before you. Rid me of this Coningsby, and I will secure you all that you want. Doubt not me. There is no reason. I want a firm ally. There must be two."

"It shall be done," said Rigby; "it must be done. If once the notion gets wind that one of the Castle family may perchance stand for Darlford, all the present combinations will be disorganised. It must be done at once. I know that the Government will dissolve."

"So I hear for certain," said Lucretia. "Be sure there is no time to lose. What does he want with you to-day?"

"I know not; there are so many things."

"To be sure: and yet I cannot doubt he will speak of this quarrel. Let not the occasion be lost. Whatever his mood, the subject may be introduced. If good, you will guide him more easily; if dark, the love for the Hellingsley girl, the fact of the brother being in his castle, drinking his wine, riding his horses, ordering about his servants, you will omit no details: a Millbank quite at home at Coningsby will lash him to madness! 'Tis quite ripe. Not a word that you have seen me. Go, go, or he may hear that you have arrived. I shall be at home all the morning. It will be but gallant that you should pay me a little visit when you have transacted your business. You understand. *Au revoir!*"

Lady Monmouth took up again her French novel; but her eye soon glanced over the page, unattached by its contents. Her own existence was too interesting to find any excitement in fiction. It was nearly three years since her marriage; that great step which she ever had a conviction was to lead to results still greater. Of late she had often been filled with a presentiment that they were near at hand; never more so than on this day. Irresistible was the current of associations that led her to meditate on freedom, wealth, power; on a career which should at the same time dazzle the imagination and gratify her heart. Notwithstanding the gossip of Paris, founded on no authentic knowledge of her husband's character or information, based on the haphazard observations of the floating multitude, Lucretia herself had no reason to fear that her influence over Lord Monmouth, if exerted, was materially diminished. But satisfied that he had formed no other tie, with

her ever the test of her position, she had not thought it expedient, and certainly would have found it irksome, to maintain that influence by any ostentatious means. She knew that Lord Monmouth was capricious, easily wearied, soon palled; and that on men who have no affections, affection has no hold. Their passions or their fancies, on the contrary, as it seemed to her, are rather stimulated by neglect or indifference, provided that they are not systematic; and the circumstance of a wife being admired by one who is not her husband, sometimes wonderfully revives the passion or renovates the respect of him who should be devoted to her.

The health of Lord Monmouth was the subject which never was long absent from the vigilance or meditation of Lucretia. She was well assured that his life was no longer secure. She knew that after their marriage he had made a will, which secured to her a very large portion of his great wealth, in case of their having no issue, and after the accident at Paris all hope in that respect was over. Recently the extreme anxiety which Lord Monmouth had evinced about terminating the abeyance of the barony to which his first wife was a co-heiress in favour of his grandson, had alarmed Lucretia. To establish in the land another branch of the house of Coningsby was evidently the last excitement of Lord Monmouth, and perhaps a permanent one. If the idea were once accepted, notwithstanding the limit to its endowment which Lord Monmouth might at the first start contemplate, Lucretia had sufficiently studied his temperament to be convinced that all his energies and all his resources would ultimately be devoted to its practical fulfilment. Her original prejudice against Coningsby and jealousy of his influence had therefore of late been considerably aggravated; and the intelligence that for the first time there was a misunderstanding between Coningsby and her husband filled her with excitement and hope. She knew her Lord well enough to feel assured that the cause for the displeasure in the present instance could not be a light one, she resolved instantly to labour that it should not be transient; and it so happened that she had applied for aid in this endeavour to the very individual in whose power it rested to accomplish all her desire, while in doing so he felt at the same time he was defending his own position and advancing his own interests.

Lady Monmouth was now awaiting with some excitement the return of Mr. Rigby. His interview with his patron was of unusual length. An hour, and more than an hour, had elapsed, Lady Monmouth again threw aside the book which more than once she had discarded. She paced the room; restless rather than disquieted. She had complete confidence in Rigby's ability for the occasion; and with her knowledge of Lord Monmouth's cha-

racter, she could not contemplate the possibility of failure, if the circumstances were adroitly introduced to his consideration. Still time stole on; the harassing and exhausting process of suspense was acting on her nervous system. She began to think that Rigby had not found the occasion favourable for the catastrophe; that Lord Monmouth, from apprehension of disturbing Rigby and entailing explanations on himself, had avoided the necessary communication; that her skilful combination for the moment had missed. Two hours had now elapsed, and Lucretia, in a state of considerable irritation, was about to inquire whether Mr. Rigby were with his Lordship, when the door of her boudoir opened, and that gentleman appeared.

"How long you have been," exclaimed Lady Monmouth. "Now sit down and tell me what has passed."

Lady Monmouth pointed to the seat which Flora had occupied.

"I thank your Ladyship," said Mr. Rigby, with a somewhat grave and yet perplexed expression of countenance, and seating himself at some little distance from his companion, "but I am very well here."

There was a pause. Instead of responding to the invitation of Lady Monmouth to communicate with his usual readiness and volubility, Mr. Rigby was silent, and, if it were possible to use such an expression with regard to such a gentleman, apparently embarrassed.

"Well," said Lady Monmouth, "does he know about the Millbanks?"

"Everything," said Mr. Rigby.

"And what did he say?"

"His Lordship was greatly shocked," replied Mr. Rigby, with a pious expression of features. "Such monstrous ingratitude! As his Lordship very justly observed, 'It is impossible to say what is going on under my own roof, or to what I can trust.'"

"But he made an exception in your favour, I dare say, my dear Mr. Rigby," said Lady Monmouth.

"Lord Monmouth was pleased to say that I possessed his entire confidence," said Mr. Rigby, "and that he looked to me in his difficulties."

"Very sensible of him. And what is to become of Mr. Coningsby?"

"The steps which his Lordship is about to take with reference to the establishment generally," said Mr. Rigby, "will allow the connection that at present subsists between that gentleman and his noble relative, now that Lord Monmouth's eyes are open to his real character, to terminate naturally without the necessity of any formal explanation."

"But what do you mean by the steps he is going to take in his establishment generally?"

"Lord Monmouth thinks he requires change of scene."

"Oh! is he going to drag me abroad again?" exclaimed Lady Monmouth, with great impatience.

"Why, not exactly," said Mr. Rigby, rather demurely.

"I hope he is not going again to that dreadful castle in Lancashire."

"Lord Monmouth was thinking that as you were tired of Paris, you might find some of the German Baths agreeable."

"Why, there is nothing that Lord Monmouth dislikes so much as a German bathing-place!"

"Exactly," said Mr. Rigby.

"Then how capricious in him wanting to go to them?"

"He does not want to go to them!"

"What do you mean, Mr. Rigby?" said Lady Monmouth, in a lower voice, and looking him full in the face with a glance seldom bestowed.

There was a churlish and unusual look about Rigby. It was as if malignant, and yet at the same time a little frightened, he had screwed himself into doggedness.

"I mean what Lord Monmouth means. He suggests that if your Ladyship were to pass the summer at Kissengen, for example, and a paragraph in the 'Morning Post' were to announce that his Lordship was about to join you there, all awkwardness would be removed; and no one could for a moment take the liberty of supposing, even if his Lordship did not ultimately reach you, that anything like a separation had occurred."

"A separation!" said Lady Monmouth.

"Quite amicable," said Mr. Rigby. "I would never have consented to interfere in the affair, but to secure that most desirable point."

"I will see Lord Monmouth at once," said Lucretia, rising, her natural pallor aggravated into a ghoul-like tint.

"His Lordship has gone out," said Mr. Rigby, rather stubbornly.

"Our conversation, sir, then finishes: I wait his return." She bowed haughtily.

"His Lordship will never return to Monmouth House again."

Lucretia sprang from the sofa.

"Miserable craven!" she exclaimed; "has the cowardly tyrant fled? And he really thinks that I am to be crushed by such an instrument as this! Pah! He may leave Monmouth House, but I shall not. Begone, sir!"

"Still anxious to secure an amicable separation," said Mr. Rigby, "your Ladyship must allow me to place the circumstances of the case fairly before your excellent judgment. Lord Monmouth

has decided upon a course; you know as well as I that he never swerves from his resolutions. He has left peremptory instructions, and he will listen to no appeal. He has empowered me to represent to your Ladyship that he wishes in every way to consider your convenience. He suggests that everything, in short, should be arranged as if his Lordship were himself unhappily no more; that your Ladyship should at once enter into your jointure, which shall be made payable quarterly to your order—provided you can find it convenient to live upon the Continent," added Mr. Rigby, with some hesitation.

"And suppose I cannot?"

"Why, then, we will leave your Ladyship to the assertion of your rights."

"We!"

"I beg your Ladyship's pardon. I speak as the friend of the family—the trustee of your marriage settlement, well known also as Lord Monmouth's executor," said Mr. Rigby, his countenance gradually regaining its usual callous confidence, and some degree of self-complacency, as he remembered the good things which he enumerated.

"I have decided," said Lady Monmouth. "I will assert my rights. Your master has mistaken my character and his own position. He shall rue the day that he assailed me."

"I should be sorry if there were any violence," said Mr. Rigby, "especially as everything is left to my management and control. An office, indeed, which I only accepted for your mutual advantage. I think, upon reflection, I might put before your Ladyship some considerations which might induce you, on the whole, to be of opinion that it will be better for us to draw together in this business, as we have hitherto, indeed, throughout an acquaintance now of some years." Rigby was resuming all his usual tone of brazen familiarity.

"Your self-confidence exceeds even Lord Monmouth's estimate of it," said Lucretia.

"Now, now, you are unkind. Your Ladyship mistakes my position. I am interfering in this business for your sake. I might have refused the office. It would have fallen to another, who would have fulfilled it without any delicacy and consideration for your feelings. View my interposition in that light, my dear Lady Monmouth, and circumstances will assume altogether a new colour."

"I beg that you will quit the house, sir."

Mr. Rigby shook his head. "I would with pleasure to oblige you, were it in my power; but Lord Monmouth has particularly desired that I should take up my residence here permanently.

The servants are now my servants. It is useless to ring the bell. For your Ladyship's sake, I wish everything to be accomplished with tranquillity, and, if possible, friendliness and good-feeling. You can have even a week for the preparations for your departure, if necessary. I will take that upon myself. Any carriages, too, that you desire; your jewels—at least all those that are not at the banker's. The arrangement about your jointure, your letters of credit, even your passport, I will attend to myself; only too happy if, by this painful interference, I have in any way contributed to soften the annoyance which, at the first blush you may naturally experience, but which, like everything else, take my word, will wear off."

"I shall send for Lord Eskdale," said Lady Monmouth. "He is a gentleman."

"I am quite sure," said Mr. Rigby, "that Lord Eskdale will give you the same advice as myself, if he only reads your Ladyship's letters," he added slowly, "to Prince Trautsmandorff."

"My letters?" said Lady Monmouth.

"Pardon me," said Rigby, putting his hand in his pocket, as if to guard some treasure, "I have no wish to revive painful associations; but I have them, and I must act upon them, if you persist in treating me as a foe, who am in reality your best friend; which indeed I ought to be, having the honour of acting as trustee under your marriage settlement, and having known you so many years."

"Leave me for the present alone," said Lady Monmouth. "Send me my servant, if I have one. I shall not remain here the week which you mention, but quit at once this house, which I wish I had never entered. Adieu! Mr. Rigby, you are now lord of Monmouth House, and yet I cannot help feeling you too will be discharged before he dies."

Mr. Rigby made Lady Monmouth a bow such as became the master of the house, and then withdrew.

CHAPTER VII.

A PARAGRAPH in the "Morning Post," a few days after his interview with his grandfather, announcing that Lord and Lady Monmouth had quitted town for the baths of Kissingen, startled Coningsby, who called the same day at Monmouth House in consequence. There he learnt more authentic details of their unexpected movements. It appeared that Lady Monmouth had certainly departed and the porter, with a rather sceptical visage,

informed Coningsby that Lord Monmouth was to follow; but when, he could not tell. At present his Lordship was at Brighton, and in a few days was about to take possession of a villa at Richmond, which had for some time been fitting up for him under the superintendence of Mr. Rigby, who, as Coningsby also learnt, now permanently resided at Monmouth House. All this intelligence made Coningsby ponder. He was sufficiently acquainted with the parties concerned to feel assured that he had not learnt the whole truth. What had really taken place, and what was the real cause of the occurrences, were equally mystical to him: all he was convinced of was, that some great domestic revolution had been suddenly effected.

Coningsby entertained for his grandfather a sincere affection. With the exception of their last unfortunate interview, he had experience I from Lord Monmouth nothing but kindness both in phrase and deed. There was also something in Lord Monmouth, when he pleased it, rather fascinating to young men; and as Coningsby had never occasioned him any feelings but pleasurable ones, he was always disposed to make himself delightful to his grandson. The experience of a consummate man of the world advanced in life, detailed without rigidity to youth, with frankness and facility, is bewitching. Lord Monmouth was never garrulous: he was always pithy and could be picturesque. He revealed a character in a sentence; and detected the ruling passion with the hand of a master. Besides, he had seen everybody and had done everything; and though, on the whole, too indolent for conversation, and loving to be talked to, these were circumstances which made his too rare communications the more precious.

With these feelings, Coningsby resolved, the moment that he learned that his grandfather was established at Richmond, to pay him a visit. He was informed that Lord Monmouth was at home, and he was shown into a drawing-room, where he found two French ladies in their bonnets, whom he soon discovered to be actresses. They also had come down to pay a visit to his grandfather, and were by no means displeased to pass the interval that must elapse before they had that pleasure in chatting with his grandson. Coningsby found them extremely amusing; with the finest spirits in the world, imperturbable good temper, and an unconscious practical philosophy, that defied the devil Care and all his works. And well it was that he found such agreeable companions, for time flowed on, and no summons arrived to call him to his grandfather's presence, and no herald to announce his grandfather's advent. The ladies and Coningsby had exhausted badinage; they had examined and criticised all the furniture; had rifled the vases of their prettiest flowers; and Clotilde, who had

already sung several times, was proposing a duet to Ermengarde, when a servant entered, and told the ladies that a carriage was in attendance to give them an airing, and after that Lord Monmouth hoped they would return and dine with him; then turning to Coningsby, he informed him, with his lord's compliments, that Lord Monmouth was sorry he was too much engaged to see him.

Nothing was to be done but to put a tolerably good face upon it. "Embrace Lord Monmouth for me," said Coningsby to his fair friends, "and tell him I think it very unkind that he did not ask me to dinner with you."

Coningsby said this with a gay air, but really with a depressed spirit. He felt convinced that his grandfather was deeply displeased with him; and as he rode away from the villa, he could not resist the strong impression that he was destined never to re-enter it. Yet it was decreed otherwise. It so happened that the idle message which Coningsby had left for his grandfather, and which he never seriously supposed for a moment that his late companions would have given their host, operated entirely in his favour. Whatever were the feelings with respect to Coningsby at the bottom of Lord Monmouth's heart, he was actuated in his refusal to see him not more from displeasure than from an anticipatory horror of something like a scene. Even a surrender from Coningsby without terms, and an offer to declare himself a candidate for Darlford, or to do anything else that his grandfather wished, would have been disagreeable to Lord Monmouth in his present mood. As in politics a revolution is often followed by a season of torpor, so in the case of Lord Monmouth the separation from his wife, which had for a long period occupied his meditation, was succeeded by a vein of mental dissipation. He did not wish to be reminded by anything or any person that he had still in some degree the misfortune of being a responsible member of society. He wanted to be surrounded by individuals who were above or below the conventional interests of what is called "the World." He wanted to hear nothing of those painful and embarrassing influences which from our contracted experience and want of enlightenment we magnify into such undue importance. For this purpose he wished to have about him persons whose knowledge of the cares of life concerned only the means of existence; and whose sense of its objects referred only to the sources of enjoyment; persons who had not been educated in the idolatry of Respectability: that is to say, of realising such an amount of what is termed Character by a hypocritical deference to the prejudices of the community as may enable them, at suitable times, and under convenient circumstances and disguises, to plunder the public. This was the Monmouth Philosophy.

With these feelings, Lord Monmouth recoiled at this moment

from grandsons and relations and ties of all kinds. He did not wish to be reminded of his identity; but to swim unmolested and undisturbed in his Epicurean dream. When, therefore, his fair visitors—Clotilde, who opened her mouth only to breathe roses and diamonds, and Ermengarde, who was so good-natured that she sacrificed even her lovers to her friends—saw him merely to exclaim at the same moment, and with the same voices of thrilling joyousness—

"Why did not you ask him to dinner?"

And then, without waiting for his reply, entered with that rapidity of elocution which Frenchwomen can alone command into the catalogue of his charms and accomplishments. Lord Monmouth began to regret that he really had not seen Coningsby, who it appeared might have greatly contributed to the pleasure of the day. The message, which was duly given, however, settled the business. Lord Monmouth felt that any chance of explanations, or even allusions to the past, was out of the question; and to defend himself from the accusations of his animated guests, he said—

"Well, he shall come to dine with you next time."

There is no end to the influence of woman on our life. It is at the bottom of everything that happens to us. And so it was, that in spite of all the combinations of Lucretia and Mr. Rigby, and the mortification and resentment of Lord Monmouth, the favourable impression he casually made on a couple of French actresses occasioned Coningsby, before a month had elapsed since his memorable interview at Monmouth House, to receive an invitation again to dine with his grandfather.

The party was very agreeable. Clotilde and Ermengarde had wits as sparkling as their eyes. There was the manager of the Opera, a great friend of Villebecque, and his wife, a very splendid lady, who had been a prima donna of celebrity, and still had a commanding voice for a chamber; a Carlist nobleman, who lived upon his traditions, and who, though without a son, could tell of a festival given by his family, before the revolution, which had cost a million of francs; and a Neapolitan physician, in whom Lord Monmouth had great confidence, and who himself believed in the elixir vitæ, made up the party, with Lucian Gay, Coningsby, and Mr. Rigby. Our hero remarked that Villebecque on this occasion sat at the bottom of the table, but Flora did not appear.

In the mean time, the month which brought about this satisfactory and at one time unexpected result, was fruitful also in other circumstances still more interesting. Coningsby and Edith met frequently, if to breathe the same atmosphere in the same crowded saloons can be described as meeting; ever watching each other's movements, and yet studious never to encounter each other's

glance. The charms of Miss Millbank had become an universal topic—they were celebrated in ball-rooms, they were discussed at clubs; Edith was the beauty of the season. All admired her, many sighed even to express their admiration; but the devotion of Lord Beaumanoir, who always hovered about her, deterred them from a rivalry which might have made the boldest despair. As for Coningsby, he passed his life principally with the various members of the Sydney family; and was almost daily riding with Lady Everingham and her sister, generally accompanied by Lord Henry and his friend Eustace Lyle, between whom, indeed, and Coningsby there were relations of intimacy scarcely less inseparable. Coningsby had spoken to Lady Everingham of the rumoured marriage of her elder brother, and found, although the family had not yet been formally apprised of it, she entertained very little doubt of its ultimate occurrence. She admired Miss Millbank, with whom her acquaintance continued slight; and she wished, of course, that her brother should marry and be happy. "But Percy is often in love," she would add, "and never likes us to be very intimate with his inamoratas. He thinks it destroys the romance; and that domestic familiarity may compromise his heroic character. However," she added, "I really believe that will be a match."

On the whole, though he bore a serene aspect to the world, Coningsby passed this month in a state of restless misery. His soul was brooding on one subject, and he had no confidant; he could not resist the spell that impelled him to the society where Edith might at least be seen, and the circle in which he lived was one in which her name was frequently mentioned. Alone, in his solitary rooms in the Albany, he felt all his desolation; and often a few minutes before he figured in the world, apparently followed and courted by all, he had been plunged in the darkest fits of irremediable wretchedness.

He had, of course, frequently met Lady Wallinger, but their salutations, though never omitted, and on each side cordial, were brief. There seemed to be a tacit understanding between them not to refer to a subject fruitful in painful reminiscences.

The season waned. In the fulfilment of a project originally formed in the playing-fields of Eton, often recurred to at Cambridge, and cherished with the fondness with which men cling to a scheme of early youth, Coningsby, Henry Sydney, Vere, and Buckhurst, had engaged some moors together this year; and in a few days they were about to quit town for Scotland. They had pressed Eustace Lyle to accompany them, but he who in general seemed to have no pleasure greater than their society, had surprised them by declining their invitation, with some vague mention that he rather thought he should go abroad.

It was the last day of July, and all the world were at a breakfast given, at a fanciful cottage, situate in beautiful gardens on the banks of the Thames, by Lady Everingham. The weather was as bright as the romances of Boccaccio; there were pyramids of strawberries in bowls colossal enough to hold orange trees; and the choicest bands filled the air with enchanting strains, while a brilliant multitude sauntered on turf-like velvet, or roamed in desultory existence amid the quivering shades of winding walks.

"My fête was prophetic," said Lady Everingham, when she saw Coningsby. "I am glad it is connected with an incident. It gives it a point."

"You are mystical as well as prophetic. Tell me what we are to celebrate."

"Theresa is going to be married."

"Then I, too, will prophesy and name the hero of the romance—Eustace Lyle."

"You have been more prescient than I," said Lady Everingham, "perhaps because I was thinking too much of some one else."

"It seems to me an union which all must acknowledge perfect. I hardly know which I love best. I have had my suspicions a long time; and when Eustace refused to go to the moors with us, though I said nothing, I was convinced."

"At any rate," said Lady Everingham, sighing, with a rather smiling face, "we are kinsfolk, Mr. Coningsby; though I would gladly have wished to have been more."

"Were those your thoughts, dear Lady? Ever kind to me! Happiness," he added, in a mournful tone, "I fear can never be mine."

"And why?"

"Ah! 'tis a tale too strange and sorrowful for a day when, like Seged, we must all determine to be happy."

"You have already made me miserable."

"Here comes a group that will make you gay," said Coningsby, as he moved on. Edith and the Wallingers, accompanied by Lord Beaumanoir, Mr. Melton, and Sir Charles Buckhurst, formed the party. They seemed profuse in their congratulations to Lady Everingham, having already learnt the intelligence from her brother.

Coningsby stopped to speak to Lady St. Julians, who had still a daughter to marry. Both Augustina, who was at Coningsby Castle, and Clara Isabella, who ought to have been there, had each secured the right man. But Adelaide Victoria had now appeared, and Lady St. Julians had a great regard for the favourite grandson of Lord Monmouth, and also for the influential friend of Lord Vere and Sir Charles Buckhurst. In case Coningsby did not determine

to become her son-in-law himself, he might counsel either of his friends to a judicious decision on an inevitable act.

"Strawberries and cream?" said Lord Eskdale to Mr. Ormsby, who seemed occupied with some delicacies.

"Egad! no no, no; those days are passed. I think there is a little easterly wind with all this fine appearance.

"I am for in-door nature myself," said Lord Eskdale. "Do you know I don't half like the way Monmouth is going on. He never gets out of that villa of his. He should change his air more. Tell him."

"It's no use telling him anything. Have you heard anything of Miladi?"

"I had a letter from her to-day; she writes in very good spirits. I am sorry it broke up, and yet I never thought it would last so long."

"I gave them two years," said Mr. Ormsby. "Lord Monmouth lived with his first wife two years. And afterwards with the Mirandola at Milan, at least nearly two years; it was a year and ten months. I must know, for he called me in to settle affairs. I took the lady to the Baths at Lucca on the pretence that Monmouth would meet us there. He went to Paris. All his great affairs have been two years. I remember I wanted to bet Cassilis at Whites' on it when he married; but I thought, being his intimate friend—the oldest friend he has, indeed, and one of his trustees—it was perhaps as well not to do it."

"You should have made the bet with himself," said Lord Eskdale, "and then there never would have been a separation."

"Hah, hah, hah! Do you know I feel the wind"

About an hour after this, Coningsby, who had just quitted the Duchess, met, on a terrace by the river, Lady Wallinger, walking with Mrs. Guy Flouncey and a Russian Prince, whom that lady was enchanting. Coningsby was about to pass with some slight courtesy, but Lady Wallinger stopped and would speak to him, on very slight subjects—the weather and the fête, but yet adroitly enough managed to make him turn and join her. Mrs. Guy Flouncey walked on a little before with her Russian admirer. Lady Wallinger followed with Coningsby.

"The match that has been proclaimed to-day has greatly surprised me," said Lady Wallinger.

"Indeed!" said Coningsby; "I confess I was long prepared for it. And it seems to me the most natural alliance conceivable, and one that every one must approve."

"Lady Everingham seems very much surprised at it."

"Ah! Lady Everingham is a very brilliant personage, and cannot deign to observe obvious circumstances."

"Do you know, Mr. Coningsby, that I always thought you were engaged to Lady Theresa?"

"I!"

"Indeed, we were informed more than a month ago that you were positively going to be married to her."

"I am not one of those who can shift their affections with such rapidity, Lady Wallinger."

Lady Wallinger looked distressed. "You remember our meeting you on the stairs at —— House, Mr. Coningsby?"

"Painfully. It is deeply graven on my brain."

"Edith had just been informed that you were going to be married to Lady Theresa."

"Not surely by him to whom she is herself going to be married?" said Coningsby, reddening.

"I am not aware that she is going to be married to any one. Lord Beaumanoir admires her—has always admired her. But Edith has given him no encouragement, at least gave him no encouragement as long as she believed—but why dwell on such an unhappy subject, Mr. Coningsby? I am to blame—I have been to blame perhaps before, but indeed I think it cruel, very cruel, that Edith and you are kept asunder."

"You have always been my best, my dearest friend, and are the most amiable and admirable of women. But tell me, is it indeed true that Edith is not going to be married?"

At this moment Mrs. Guy Flouncey turned round, and assuring Lady Wallinger that the Prince and herself had agreed to refer some point to her about the most transcendental ethics of flirtation, this deeply interesting conversation was arrested, and Lady Wallinger, with becoming suavity, was obliged to listen to the lady's lively appeal of exaggerated nonsense and the Prince's affected protests, while Coningsby walked by her side, pale and agitated, and then offered his arm to Lady Wallinger, which she accepted with an affectionate pressure. At the end of the terrace they met some other guests, and soon were immersed in the multitude that thronged the lawn.

"There is Sir Joseph," said Lady Wallinger, and Coningsby looked up, and saw Edith on his arm. They were unconsciously approaching them. Lord Beaumanoir was there, but he seemed to shrink into nothing to-day before Buckhurst, who was captivated for the moment by Edith, and hearing that no knight was resolute enough to try a fall with the Marquis, was impelled by his talent for action to enter the lists. He had talked down everybody, unhorsed every cavalier Nobody had a chance against him; he answered all your questions before you asked them; contradicted everybody with the intrepidity of a Rigby; annihilated your

anecdotes by historiettes infinitely more piquant; and if anybody chanced to make a joke which he could not excel, declared immediately that it was a Joe Miller. He was absurd, extravagant, grotesque, noisy; but he was young, rattling, and interesting, from his health and spirits. Edith was extremely amused by him; and was encouraging by her smile his spiritual excesses, when they all suddenly met Lady Wallinger and Coningsby.

The eyes of Edith and Coningsby met for the first time since they so cruelly encountered on the staircase of —— House. A deep, quick blush suffused her face, her eyes gleamed with a sudden corruscation; suddenly and quickly she put forth her hand.

Yes! he presses once more that hand which permanently to retain is the passion of his life, yet which may never be his! It seemed that for the ravishing delight of that moment, he could have borne with cheerfulness all the dark and harrowing misery of the year that had passed away since he embraced her in the woods of Hellingsley, and pledged his faith by the waters of the rushing Darl.

He seized the occasion which offered itself, a moment to walk by her side, and to snatch some brief instants of unreserved communion.

"Forgive me!" she said.

"Ah! how could you ever doubt me?" said Coningsby.

"I was unhappy."

"And now we are to each other as before."

"And will be; come what come may."

END OF BOOK VIII.

BOOK IX.

CHAPTER I.

It was merry Christmas at St. Geneviève. There was a yule log blazing on every hearth in that wide domain, from the hall of the squire to the peasant's roof. The Buttery Hatch was open for the whole week from noon to sunset; all comers might take their fill, and each carry away as much bold beef, white bread, and jolly ale, as a strong man could bear in a basket with one hand. For every woman a red cloak, and a coat of broad cloth for every man. All day long, carts laden with fuel and warm raiment were traversing the various districts, distributing comfort and dispensing cheer. For a Christian gentleman of high degree was Eustace Lyle.

Within his hall, too, he holds his revel, and his beauteous bride welcomes their guests, from her noble parents to the faithful tenants of the house. All classes are mingled in the joyous equality that becomes the season, at once sacred and merry. There are carols for the eventful eve, and mummers for the festive day.

The Duke and Duchess, and every member of the family, had consented this year to keep their Christmas with the newly-married couple. Coningsby, too, was there, and all his friends. The party was numerous, gay, hearty, and happy; for they were all united by sympathy.

They were planning that Henry Sydney should be appointed Lord of Misrule, or ordained Abbot of Unreason at the least, so successful had been his revival of the Mummers, the Hobby-horse not forgotten. Their host had entrusted to Lord Henry the restoration of many old observances; and the joyous feeling which this celebration of Christmas had diffused throughout a very extensive district, was a fresh argument in favour of Lord Henry's principle, that a mere mechanical mitigation of the material necessities of the humbler classes—a mitigation which must inevitably be very limited, can never alone avail sufficiently to ameliorate their condition; that their condition is not merely "a knife-and-fork question,"—to use the coarse and shallow phrase of the Utilitarian school; that a simple satisfaction of the grosser necessi-

ties of our nature will not make a happy people; that you must cultivate the heart as well as seek to content the belly; and that the surest means to elevate the character of the people is to appeal to their affections.

There is nothing more interesting than to trace predisposition. An indefinite, yet strong sympathy, with the peasantry of the realm had been one of the characteristic sensibilities of Lord Henry at Eton. Yet a schoolboy, he had busied himself with their pastimes and the details of their cottage economy. As he advanced in life, the horizon of his views expanded with his intelligence and his experience; and the son of one of the noblest of our houses, to whom the delights of life are offered with fatal facility, on the very threshold of his career, he devoted his time and thought, labour and life, to one vast and noble purpose, the elevation of the condition of the great body of the people.

I vote for Buckhurst being Lord of Misrule," said Lord Henry; "I will be content with being his Gentleman Usher."

"It shall be put to the vote," said Lord Vere.

"No one has a chance against Buckhurst," said Coningsby.

"Now, Sir Charles," said Lady Everingham, "your absolute sway is about to commence. And what is your will?"

"The first thing must be my formal installation," said Buckhurst. "I vote the Boar's head be carried in procession thrice round the hall, and Beau shall be the champion to challenge all who question my right. Duke, you shall be my chief butler; the Duchess my herbwoman. She is to walk before me, and scatter rosemary. Coningsby shall carry the Boar's head; Lady Theresa and Lady Everingham shall sing the canticle; Lord Everingham shall be marshal of the lists, and put all in the stocks who are found sober and decorous; Lyle shall be the palmer from the Holy Land, and Vere shall ride the Hobby-horse. Some must carry cups of Hippocrass; some lighted tapers; all must join in chorus."

He ceased his instructions, and all hurried away to carry them into effect. Some hastily arrayed themselves in fanciful dresses; the ladies in robes of white, with garlands of flowers; some drew pieces of armour from the wall, and decked themselves with helm and hauberk; others waved ancient banners. They brought in the Boar's head on a large silver dish, and Coningsby raised it aloft. They formed into procession, the Duchess distributing rosemary; Buckhurst swaggering with all the majesty of Tamerlane, his mock court irresistibly humourous with their servility; and the sweet voice of Lady Everingham chanting the first verse of the Canticle, followed, in the second, by the rich tones of Lady Theresa:—

I

Caput Apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino.
The Boar's heade in hande bring I,
With garlandes gay and rosemary,
I pray you all singe merrily,
Qui estis in convibio.

II.

Caput Apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino.
The Boar's heade I understande
Is the chief servyce in this lande
Loke wherever it be fande,
Servite cum cantico.

"The procession thrice paraded the hall. Then they stopped and the Lord of Misrule ascended his throne, and his courtiers formed round him in circle. Behind him they held the ancient banners and waved their glittering arms; and placed on a lofty and illuminated pedestal the Boar's head covered with garlands. It was a good picture, and the Lord of Misrule sustained his part with untiring energy. He was addressing his court in a pompous rhapsody of merry nonsense, when a servant approached Coningsby, and told him that he was wanted without.

Our hero retired unperceived. A despatch had arrived for him from London. Without any prescience of its purpose, he nevertheless broke the seal with a trembling hand. His presence was immediately desired in town—Lord Monmouth was dead.

CHAPTER II

This was a crisis in the life of Coningsby; yet, like many critical epochs, the person most interested in it was not sufficiently aware of its character. The first feeling which he experienced at the intelligence was sincere affliction. He was fond of his grandfather; had received great kindness from him, and at a period of life when it was most welcome. The neglect and hardships of his early years, instead of leaving a prejudice against one who, by some, might be esteemed their author, had by their contrast only

rendered Coningsby more keenly sensible of the solicitude and enjoyment which had been lavished on his happy youth.

The next impression on his mind was undoubtedly a natural and reasonable speculation on the effect of this bereavement on his fortunes. Lord Monmouth had more than once assured Coningsby that he had provided for him as became a near relative to whom he was attached, and in a manner which ought to satisfy the wants and wishes of an English gentleman. The allowance which Lord Monmouth had made him, as considerable as usually accorded to the eldest sons of wealthy peers, might justify him in estimating his future patrimony as extremely ample. He was aware, indeed, that at a subsequent period his grandfather had projected for him fortunes of a still more elevated character. He looked to Coningsby as the future representative of an ancient barony, and had been purchasing territory with the view of supporting the title. But Coningsby did not by any means firmly reckon on these views being realised. He had a suspicion that in thwarting the wishes of his grandfather in not becoming a candidate for Darlford, he had at the moment arrested arrangements which, from the tone of Lord Monmouth's communication, he believed were then in progress for that purpose; and he thought it improbable, with his knowledge of his grandfather's habits, that Lord Monmouth had found either time or inclination to resume before his decease the completion of these plans Indeed there was a period when, in adopting the course which he pursued with respect to Darlford, Coningsby was well aware that he perilled more than the large fortune which was to accompany the barony. Had not a separation between Lord Monmouth and his wife taken place simultaneously with Coningsby's difference with his grandfather, he was conscious that the consequences might have been even altogether fatal to his prospects; but the absence of her evil influence at such a conjuncture, its permanent removal, indeed, from the scene, coupled with his fortunate though not formal reconciliation with Lord Monmouth, had long ago banished from his memory all those apprehensions to which he had felt it impossible at the time to shut his eyes. Before he left town for Scotland he had made a farewell visit to his grandfather, who, though not as cordial as in old days, had been gracious; and Coningsby, during his excursion to the moors, and his various visits to the country, had continued at intervals to write to his grandfather, as had been for some years his custom. On the whole, with an indefinite feeling which, in spite of many a rational effort, did nevertheless haunt his mind, that this great and sudden event might exercise a very vast and beneficial influence on his worldly position, Coningsby could not but feel some consolation in the affliction which he sincerely

experienced, in the hope that he might at all events now offer to Edith a home worthy of her charms, her virtues, and her love.

Although he had not seen her since their hurried yet sweet reconciliation in the gardens of Lady Everingham, Coningsby was never long without indirect intelligence of the incidents of her life; and the correspondence between Lady Everingham and Henry Sydney, while they were at the moors, had apprised him that Lord Beaumanoir's suit had terminated unsuccessfully almost immediately after his brother had quitted London.

It was late in the evening when Coningsby arrived in town: he called at once on Lord Eskdale, who was one of Lord Monmouth's executors; and he persuaded Coningsby, whom he saw depressed, to dine with him alone.

"You should not be seen at a club," said the good-natured peer; "and I remember myself in old days what was the wealth of an Albanian larder."

Lord Eskdale at dinner talked very frankly of the disposition of Lord Monmouth's property. He spoke as a matter of course that Coningsby was his grandfather's principal heir.

"I don't know whether you will be happier with a large fortune?" said Lord Eskdale. "It's a troublesome thing; nobody is satisfied with what you do with it; very often not yourself. To maintain an equable expenditure; not to spend too much on one thing, too little on another, is an art. There must be a harmony, a keeping in disbursement, which very few men have. Great wealth wearies. The thing to have is about ten thousand a year, and the world to think you have only five. There's some enjoyment then; one is let alone. But the instant you have a large fortune, duties commence. And then impudent fellows borrow your money, and if you ask them for it again, they go about town saying you are a screw."

Lord Monmouth had died suddenly at his Richmond villa, which latterly he never quitted, at a little supper; with no persons near him but those who were very amusing. He suddenly found he could not lift his glass to his lips, and being extremely polite, waited a few minutes before he asked Clotilde, who was singing a very sparkling drinking song, to do him that service. When in accordance with his request she reached him, it was too late. The ladies shrieked, being very frightened: at first they were in despair, but after reflection, they evinced some intention of plundering the house. Villebecque, who was absent at the moment, arrived in time; and everybody became orderly and broken-hearted.

The body had been removed to Monmouth House, where it had been embalmed and laid in state. The funeral was not numerously attended. There was nobody in town; some distinguished connexions, however, came up from the country, though it was a period

inconvenient for such movements. After the funeral, the will was to be read in the principal saloon of Monmouth House, one of those gorgeous apartments that had excited the boyish wonder of Coningsby on his first visit to that paternal roof, and now hung in black, adorned with the escutcheon of the deceased peer.

The testamentary dispositions of the late lord were still unknown, though the names of his executors had been announced by his family solicitor, in whose custody the will and codicils had always remained. The executors under the will were Lord Eskdale, Mr. Ormsby, and Mr. Rigby. By a subsequent appointment Sidonia had been added. All these individuals were now present. Coningsby, who had been chief mourner, stood on the right hand of the solicitor, who sat at the end of a long table, round which in groups were ranged all who had attended the funeral, including several of the superior members of the household; among them M. Villebecque.

The solicitor rose and explained that though Lord Monmouth had been in the habit of very frequently adding codicils to his will, the original will, however changed or modified, had never been revoked; it was therefore necessary to commence by reading that instrument. So saying, he sat down, and breaking the seals of a large packet, he produced the will of Philip Augustus, Marquis of Monmouth, which had been retained in his custody since its execution.

By this will, of the date of 1829, the sum of ten thousand pounds was left to Coningsby, then unknown to his grandfather; the same sum to Mr. Rigby. There was a great number of legacies, none of superior amount, most of them of a less; these were chiefly left to old male companions, and women in various countries. There was an almost inconceivable number of small annuities to faithful servants, decayed actors, and obscure foreigners. The residue of his personal estate was left to four gentlemen, three of whom had quitted this world before the legator; the bequests therefore, had lapsed. The fourth residuary legatee, in whom, according to the terms of the will, all would have consequently centred, was Mr. Rigby.

There followed several codicils which did not materially affect the previous disposition; one of them leaving a legacy of £20,000 to the Princess Colonna; until they arrived at the latter part of the year 1832, when a codicil increased the £10,000 left under the will to Coningsby to £50,000.

After Coningsby's visit to the Castle in 1836 a very important change occurred in the disposition of Lord Monmouth's estate. The legacy of £50,000 in his favour was revoked, and the same sum left to the Princess Lucretia. A similar amount was bequeathed to Mr. Rigby; and Coningsby was left sole residuary legatee.

The marriage led to a considerable modification. An estate of about nine thousand a year which Lord Monmouth had himself purchased, and was therefore in his own disposition, was left to Coningsby. The legacy to Mr. Rigby was reduced to £20,000, and the whole of his residue left to his issue by Lady Monmouth. In case he died without issue, the estate bequeathed to Coningsby to be taken into account, and the residue then to be divided equally between Lady Monmouth and his grandson. It was under this instrument that Sidonia had been appointed an executor, and to whom Lord Monmouth left, among others, his celebrated picture of the Holy Family by Murillo, as his friend had often admired it. To Lord Eskdale he left all his female miniatures, and to Mr. Ormsby his rare and splendid collection of French novels, and all his wines, except his Tokay, which he left, with his library, to Sir Robert Peel; though this legacy was afterwards revoked, in consequence of Sir Robert's conduct about the Irish corporations.

The solicitor paused and begged permission to send for a glass of water. While this was arranging there was a murmur at the lower part of the room, but little disposition to conversation among those in the vicinity of the lawyer. Coningsby was silent, his brow a little knit; Mr. Rigby was extremely pale and restless, but said nothing. Mr. Ormsby took a pinch of snuff, and offered his box to Lord Eskdale, who was next to him. They exchanged glances, and made some observation about the weather. Sidonia stood apart with his arm folded. He had not, of course, attended the funeral, nor had he as yet exchanged any recognition with Coningsby.

"Now, gentlemen," said the solicitor, "if you please, I will proceed."

They came to the year 1839, the year Coningsby was at Hellingsley. This appeared to be a very critical period in the fortunes of Lady Monmouth; while Coningsby's reached to the culminating point. Mr. Rigby was reduced to his original legacy under the will of £10,000; a sum of equal amount was bequeathed to Armand Villebecque in acknowledgment of faithful services; all the dispositions in favour of Lady Monmouth were revoked, and she was limited to her moderate jointure of £3,000 per annum, under the marriage settlement; while everything without reserve was left absolutely to Coningsby.

A subsequent codicil determined that the £10,000 left to Mr. Rigby should be equally divided between him and Lucian Gay; but as some compensation, Lord Monmouth left to the Right Honourable Nicholas Rigby the bust of that gentleman, which he had himself presented to his Lordship, and which, at his desire, had

been placed in the vestibule at Coningsby Castle, from the amiable motive that after Lord Monmouth's decease Mr. Rigby might wish perhaps to present it to some other friend.

Lord Eskdale and Mr. Ormsby took care not to catch the eye of Mr. Rigby. As for Coningsby, he saw nobody. He maintained, during the extraordinary situation in which he was placed, a firm demeanour; but serene and regulated as he appeared to the spectators, his nerves were really strung to a high pitch.

There was yet another codicil. It bore the date of June 1840, and was made at Brighton, immediately after the separation with Lady Monmouth. It was the sight of this instrument that sustained Rigby at this great emergency. He had a wild conviction that, after all, it must set all right. He felt assured that as Lady Monmouth had already been disposed of, it must principally refer to the disinheritance of Coningsby—secured by Rigby's well-timed and malignant misrepresentations of what had occurred in Lancashire during the preceding summer. And then to whom could Lord Monmouth leave his money? However he might cut and carve up his fortunes, Rigby, and especially at a moment when he had so served him, must come in for a considerable slice.

His prescient mind was right. All the dispositions in favour of "my grandson Harry Coningsby" were revoked; and he inherited from his grandfather only the interest of the sum of £10,000 which had been originally bequeathed to him in his orphan boyhood. The executors had the power of investing the principal in any way they thought proper for his advancement in life, provided always it was not placed in "the capital stock of any manufactory."

Coningsby turned pale; he lost his abstracted look, he caught the eye of Rigby, he read the latent malice of that nevertheless anxious countenance. What passed through the mind and being of Coningsby was thought and sensation enough for a year; but it was as the flash that reveals a whole country, yet ceases to be ere one can say it lightens. There was a revelation to him of an inward power that should baffle these conventional calamities—a natural and sacred confidence in his youth and health, and knowledge and convictions. Even the recollection of Edith was not unaccompanied with some sustaining associations. At least the mightiest foe to their union was departed.

All this was the impression of an instant, simultaneous with the reading of the words of form with which the last testamentary disposition of the Marquis of Monmouth left the sum of £30,000 to Armand Villebecque; and all the rest, residue, and remainder of his unentailed property, wheresoever, and whatsoever it might be, amounting in value to nearly a million sterling, was given,

devised, and bequeathed to Flora, commonly called Flora Villebecque, the step-child of the said Armand Villebecque, "but who is my natural daughter by Marie Estelle Matteau, an actress at the Théâtre Français in the years 1811-15, by the name of Stella.'

CHAPTER III.

"This is a crash!" said Coningsby, with a grave rather than agitated countenance, to Sidonia, as his friend came up to greet him, without, however, any expression of condolence.

"This time next year you will not think so," said Sidonia.

Coningsby shrugged his shoulders.

"The principal annoyance of this sort of miscarriage," said Sidonia, "is the condolence of the gentle world. I think we may now depart. I am going home to dine. Come, and discuss your position. For the present we will not speak of it." So saying, Sidonia good-naturedly got Coningsby out of the room."

They walked together to Sidonia's house in Carlton Gardens, neither of them making the slightest allusion to the catastrophe; Sidonia inquiring where he had been, what he had been doing, since they last met, and himself conversing in his usual vein, though with a little more feeling in his manner than was his custom, When they had arrived there, Sidonia ordered their dinner instantly, and during the interval between the command and its appearance, he called Coningsby's attention to an old German painting he had just received, its brilliant colouring and quaint costumes.

"Eat, and an appetite will come," said Sidonia, when he observed Coningsby somewhat reluctant. "Take some of that Chablis; it will put you right; you will find it delicious."

In this way some twenty minutes passed; their meal was over, and they were alone together.

"I have been thinking all this time of your position," said Sidonia.

"A sorry one I fear," said Coningsby.

"I really cannot see that," said his friend. "You have experienced this morning a disappointment—but not a calamity. If you had lost your eye it would have been a calamity: no combination of circumstances could have given you another. There are really no miseries except natural miseries—conventional misfortunes are mere allusions. What seems conventionally, in a limited

view, a great misfortune, if subsequently viewed in its results, is often the happiest incident in one's life."

"I hope the day may come when I may feel this."

"Now is the moment when philosophy is of use; that is to say, now is the moment when you should clearly comprehend the circumstances which surround you. Holiday philosophy is mere idleness. You think, for example, that you have just experienced a great calamity, because you have lost the fortune on which you counted?"

"I must say I do."

"I ask you again, which would you have rather lost, your grandfather's inheritance or your right leg?"

"Most certainly my inheritance."

"Or your left arm?"

"Still the inheritance."

"Would you have received the inheritance on condition, that your front tooth should have been knocked out."

"No; certainly not."

"Would you have given up a year of your life for that fortune trebled?"

"Even at twenty-three, I would have refused the terms."

"Come, come, Coningsby, the calamity cannot be very great."

"Why, you have put it in a very ingenious point of view; and yet it is not so easy to convince a man, that he should be content who has lost everything?"

"You have a great many things at this moment that you separately prefer to the fortune that you have forfeited. How then can you be said to have lost everything?"

"What have I?" said Coningsby, despondingly.

"You have health, youth, good looks, great abilities, considerable knowledge, a fine courage, a lofty spirit, and no contemptible experience. With each of these qualities one might make a fortune; the combination ought to command the highest."

"You console me," said Coningsby, with a faint blush and a fainter smile.

"I teach you the truth. That is always solacing. I think you are a most fortunate young man; I should not have thought you more fortunate if you had been your grandfather's heir; perhaps less so. But I wish you to comprehend your position: if you understand it, you will cease to lament."

"But what should I do?"

"Bring your intelligence to bear on the right object. I make you no offers of fortune, because I know you would not accept them, and indeed I have no wish to see you a lounger in life.

If you had inherited a great patrimony, it is possible your natural character and previous culture might have saved you from its paralysing influence; but it is a question, even with you. Now you are free—that is to say, you are free, if you are not in debt. A man who has seen the world, whose fancy is harassed with glittering images of pleasures he has never experienced, cannot live on £300 per annum; but you can. You have nothing to haunt your thoughts, or disturb the abstraction of your studies. You have seen the most beautiful women; you have banquetted in palaces; you know what heroes, and wits, and statesmen are made of: and you can draw on your memory instead of your imagination for all those dazzling and interesting objects that make the inexperienced restless, and are the cause of what are called scrapes. But you can do nothing if you be in debt. You must be free. Before, therefore, we proceed, I must beg you to be frank on this head. If you have any absolute or contingent incumbrances, tell me of them without reserve, and permit me to clear them at once to any amount. You will sensibly oblige me in so doing: because I am interested in watching your career, and if the racer start with a clog my psychological observations will be imperfect."

"You are, indeed, a friend; and had I debts I would ask you to pay them. I have nothing of the kind. My grandfather was so lavish in his allowance to me that I never got into difficulties. Besides, there are horses and things without end which I must sell, and money at Drummond's."

"That will produce your outfit, whatever the course you adopt. I conceive there are two careers which deserve your consideration. In the first place, there is Diplomacy. If you decide upon that, I can assist you. There exist between me and the Minister such relations that I can at once secure you that first step which is so difficult to obtain. After that, much, if not all, depends on yourself. But I could advance you, provided you were capable. You should, at least, not languish for want of preferment. In an important post, I could throw in your way advantages which would soon permit you to control cabinets. Information commands the world. I doubt not your success, and for such a career, speedy. Let us assume it as a fact. Is it a result satisfactory? Suppose yourself in a dozen years a Plenipotentiary at a chief court, or at a critical post, with a red ribbon and the Privy Council in immediate perspective; and after a lengthened career, a pension and a peerage. Would that satisfy you? 'You don't look excited. I am hardly surprised. In your position, it would not satisfy me. A Diplomatist is, after all, a phantom. There is a want of nationality about his being. I always look upon Diplomatists as the Hebrews of politics; without country, political creeds, popular convictions,

that strong reality of existence which pervades the career of an eminent citizen in a free and great country."

"You read my thoughts," said Coningsby. "I should be sorry to sever myself from England."

"There remains then the other, the greater, the nobler career," said Sidonia, "which in England may give you all—the Bar. I am absolutely persuaded that with the requisite qualifications, and with perseverance, success at the Bar is certain. It may be retarded or precipitated by circumstances, but cannot be ultimately affected. You have a right to count with your friends on no lack of opportunities when you are ripe for them. You appear to me to have all the qualities necessary for the Bar; and you may count on that perseverance which is indispensable, for the reason I have before mentioned, because it will be sustained by your experience."

"I have resolved," said Coningsby; "I will try for the Great Seal."

CHAPTER IV.

ALONE in his chambers, no longer under the sustaining influence of Sidonia's converse and counsel, the shades of night descending and bearing gloom to the gloomy, all the excitement of his spirit evaporated, the heart of Coningsby sank. All now depended on himself, and in that self he had no trust. Why should he succeed? Success was the most rare of results. Thousands fail; units triumph. And even success could only be conducted to him by the course of many years. His career, even if prosperous, was now to commence by the greatest sacrifice which the heart of man could be called upon to sustain. Upon the stern altar of his fortunes he must immolate his first and enduring love. Before, he had a perilous position to offer Edith; now he had none. The future might then have aided them; there was no combination which could improve his present. Under any circumstances, he must, after all his thoughts and studies, commence a new novitiate, and before he could enter the arena must pass years of silent and obscure preparation. 'Twas very bitter. He looked up, his eye caught that drawing of the towers of Hellingsley which she had given him in the days of their happy hearts. That was all that was to remain of their loves. He was to bear it to the future scene of his labours, to remind him through revolving years of toil and routine, that he too had had his romance, had roamed in fair gardens, and whispered in willing ears the secrets of his passion. That drawing was to become the altar-piece of his life.

Coningsby passed an agitated night of broken sleep, waking often with a consciousness of having experienced some great misfortune, yet with a very indefinite conception of its nature. He woke exhausted and dispirited. It was a gloomy day, a raw north-easter blowing up the cloisters of the Albany, in which the fog was lingering, the newspaper on his breakfast-table, full of rumoured particulars of his grandfather's will, which had of course been duly digested by all who knew him. What a contrast to St. Geneviève! To the bright, bracing morn of that merry Christmas! That radiant and cheerful scene, and those gracious and beaming personages, seemed another world and order of beings to the one he now inhabited, and the people with whom he must now commune. The Great Seal indeed! It was the wild excitement of despair, the frenzied hope that blends inevitably with absolute ruin, that could alone have inspired such a hallucination! His unstrung heart deserted him. His energies could rally no more. He gave orders that he was at home to no one; and in his morning gown and slippers, with his feet resting on the fireplace, the once high-souled and noble-hearted Coningsby delivered himself up to despair.

The day passed in a dark trance rather than a reverie. Nothing rose to his consciousness. He was like a particle of chaos; at the best, a glimmering entity of some shadowy Hades. Towards evening the wind changed, the fog dispersed, there came a clear starry night, brisk and bright. Coningsby roused himself, dressed, and wrapping his cloak around him, sallied forth. Once more in the mighty streets, surrounded by millions, his petty griefs and personal fortunes assumed their proper position. Well had Sidonia taught him, view everything in its relation to the rest. 'Tis the secret of all wisdom. Here was the mightiest of modern cities; the rival even of the most celebrated of the ancient. Whether he inherited or forfeited fortunes, what was it to the passing throng? They would not share his splendour, or his luxury, or his comfort. But a word from his lip, a thought from his brain, expressed at the right time, at the right place, might turn their hearts, might influence their passions, might change their opinions, might affect their destiny. Nothing is great but the personal. As civilisation advances, the accidents of life become each day less important. The power of man, his greatness and his glory, depend on essential qualities. Brains every day become more precious than blood. You must give men new ideas, you must teach them new words, you must modify their manners, you must change their laws, you must root out prejudices, subvert convictions, if you wish to be great. Greatness no longer depends on rentals,—the world is too rich; nor on pedigrees,—the world is too knowing.

"The greatness of this city destroys my misery," said Coningsby, "and my genius shall conquer its greatness!"

This conviction of power in the midst of despair was a revelation of intrinsic strength. It is indeed the test of a creative spirit. From that moment all petty fears for an ordinary future quitted him. He felt that he must be prepared for great sacrifices, for infinite suffering; that there must devolve on him a bitter inheritance of obscurity, struggle, envy, and hatred, vulgar prejudice, base criticism, petty hostilities; but the dawn would break, and the hour arrive, when the welcome morning hymn of his success and his fame would sound and be re-echoed.

He returned to his rooms; calm, resolute. He slept the deep sleep of a man void of anxiety, that has neither hope nor fear to haunt his visions, but is prepared to rise on the morrow collected for the great human struggle.

And the morning came. Fresh, vigorous, not rash or precipitate, yet determined to lose no time in idle meditation, Coningsby already resolved at once to quit his present residence, was projecting a visit to some legal quarter, where he intended in future to reside, when his servant brought him a note. The handwriting was feminine. The note was from Flora. The contents were brief. She begged Mr. Coningsby, with great earnestness, to do her the honour and the kindness of calling on her at his earliest convenience, at the hotel in Brook Street, where she now resided.

It was an interview which Coningsby would rather have avoided; yet it seemed to him, after a moment's reflection, neither just, nor kind, nor manly, to refuse her request. Flora had not injured him. She was, after all, his kin. Was it for a moment to be supposed that he was envious of her lot? He replied, therefore, that in an hour he would wait upon her.

In an hour, then, two individuals are to be brought together, whose first meeting was held under circumstances most strangely different. Then Coningsby was the patron, a generous and spontaneous one, of a being obscure, almost friendless, and sinking under bitter mortification. His favour could not be the less appreciated because he was the chosen relative of a powerful noble. That noble was no more; his vast inheritance had devolved on the disregarded, even despised actress, whose suffering emotions Coningsby had then soothed, and whose fortune had risen on the destruction of all his prospects and the balk of all his aspirations.

Flora was alone when Coningsby was ushered into the room. The extreme delicacy of her appearance was increased by her deep mourning; and seated in a cushioned chair, from which she seemed to rise with an effort, she certainly presented little of the character of a fortunate and prosperous heiress.

"You are very good to come to me," she said, faintly smiling.

Coningsby extended his hand to her affectionately, in which she placed her own, looking down much embarrassed.

"You have an agreeable situation here," said Coningsby, trying to break the first awkwardness of their meeting.

"Yes; but I hope not to stop here long."

"You are going abroad?"

"No; I hope never to leave England!"

There was a slight pause; and then Flora sighed and said—

"I wish to speak to you on a subject that gives me pain: yet of which I must speak. You think I have injured you?"

"I am sure," said Coningsby, in a tone of great kindness, "that you could injure no one."

"I have robbed you of your inheritance."

"It was not mine by any right, legal or moral. There were others who might have urged an equal claim to it; and there are many who will now think that you might have preferred a superior one."

"You had enemies; I was not one. They sought to benefit themselves by injuring you. They have not benefited themselves; let them not say that they have at least injured you."

"We will care not what they say," said Coningsby; "I can sustain my lot."

"Would that I could mine!" said Flora. She sighed again with a downcast glance. Then looking up embarrassed and blushing deeply, she added, "I wish to restore to you that fortune of which I have unconsciously and unwillingly deprived you."

"The fortune is yours, dear Flora, by every right," said Coningsby, much moved; "and there is no one who wishes more fervently that it may contribute to your happiness than I do."

"It is killing me," said Flora, mournfully; then speaking with unusual animation, with a degree of excitement, she continued, "I must tell what I feel. This fortune is yours. I am happy in the inheritance, if you generously receive it from me, because Providence has made me the means of baffling your enemies. I never thought to be so happy as I shall be if you will generously accept this fortune, always intended for you. I have lived then for a purpose; I have not lived in vain; I have returned to you some service, however humble, for all your—goodness to me in my unhappiness."

"You are, as I have ever thought you, the kindest and most tender-hearted of beings. But you misconceive our mutual positions, my gentle Flora. The custom of the world does not permit such acts to either of us as you contemplate. The fortune is yours. It is left you by one on whose affections you had the

highest claim. I will not say that so large an inheritance does not bring with it an alarming responsibility; but you are not unequal to it. Have confidence in yourself. You have a good heart; you have good sense; you have a well-principled being. Your spirit will mount with your fortunes, and blend with them. You will be happy."

"And you?"

"I shall soon learn to find content, if not happiness, from other sources," said Coningsby; "and mere riches, however vast, could at no time have secured my felicity."

"But they may secure that which brings felicity," said Flora, speaking in a choking voice, and not meeting the glance of Coningsby. "You had some views in life which displeased him who has done all this: they may be, they must be, affected by this fatal caprice. Speak to me, for I cannot speak, dear Mr. Coningsby; do not let me believe that I, who would sacrifice my life for your happiness, am the cause of such calamities!"

"Whatever be my lot, I repeat I can sustain it," said Coningsby, with a cheek of scarlet.

"Ah! he is angry with me," exclaimed Flora; "he is angry with me!" and the tears stole down her pale cheek.

"No, no, no! dear Flora; I have no other feelings to you but those of affection and respect;" and Coningsby, much agitated, drew his chair nearer to her, and took her hand. "I am gratified by these kind wishes, though they are utterly impracticable; but they are the witnesses of your sweet disposition and your noble spirit. There never shall exist between us, under any circumstances, other feelings but those of kin and kindness."

He rose as if to depart. When she saw that, she started, and seemed to summon all her energies.

"You are going," she exclaimed, "and I have said nothing—I have said nothing; and I shall never see you again. Let me tell you what I mean. This fortune is yours; it must be yours. It is an arrow in my heart. Do not think I am speaking from a momentary impulse. I know myself. I have lived so much alone, I have had so little to deceive or to delude me, that I know myself. If you will not let me do justice you declare my doom. I cannot live if my existence is the cause of all your prospects being blasted, and the sweetest dreams of your life being defeated. When I die, these riches will be yours; that you cannot prevent. Refuse my present offer, and you seal the fate of that unhappy Flora whose fragile life has hung for years on the memory of your kindness."

"You must not say these words, dear Flora; you must not indulge in these gloomy feelings. You must live, and you must live happily. You have every charm and virtue which should

secure happiness. The duties and the affections of existence will fall to your lot. It is one that will always interest me, for I shall ever be your friend. You have conferred on me one of the most delightful of feelings—gratitude, and for that I bless you. I will soon see you again." Mournfully he bade her farewell.

CHAPTER V.

About a week after this interview with Flora, as Coningsby one morning was about to sally forth from the Albany to visit some chambers in the Temple to which his notice had been attracted, there was a loud ring, a bustle in the hall, and Henry Sydney and Buckhurst were ushered in.

There never was such a cordial meeting; and yet the faces of his friends were serious. The truth is, the paragraphs in the newspapers had circulated in the country, they had written to Coningsby, and after a brief delay he had confirmed their worst apprehensions. Immediately they came up to town. Henry Sydney, a younger son, could offer little but sympathy, but he declared it was his intention also to study for the bar, so that they should not be divided. Buckhurst, after many embraces and some ordinary talk, took Coningsby aside, and said, "My dear fellow, I have no objection to Henry Sydney hearing everything I say, but still these are subjects which men like to be discussed in private. Of course I expect you to share my fortune. There is enough for both. We will have an exact division."

There was something in Buckhurst's fervent resolution very loveable and a little humorous, just enough to put one in good temper with human nature and life. If there were any fellow's fortune in the world that Coningsby would share, Buckhurst's would have had the preference; but while he pressed his hand, and with a glance in which a tear and a smile seemed to contend for mastery, he gently indicated why such arrangements were, with our present manners, impossible.

"I see," said Buckhurst, after a moment's thought, "I quite agree with you. The thing cannot be done; and, to tell you the truth, a fortune is a bore. What I vote that we three do at once is, to take plenty of ready money, and enter the Austrian service. By Jove! it is the only thing to do."

"There is something in that," said Coningsby. "In the meantime, suppose you two fellows walk with me to the Temple, for I have an appointment to look at some chambers."

It was a fine day, and it was by no means a gloomy walk. Though the two friends had arrived full of indignation against Lord Monmouth, and miserable about their companion, once more in his society, and finding little difference in his carriage, they assumed unconsciously their habitual tone. As for Buckhurst, he was delighted with the Temple, which he visited for the first time. The name enchanted him. The tombs in the church convinced him that the Crusades were the only career. He would have himself become a law student if he might have prosecuted his studies in chain armour. The calmer Henry Sydney was consoled for the misfortunes of Coningsby by a fanciful project himself to pass a portion of his life amid these halls and courts, gardens and terraces, that maintain in the heart of a great city in the nineteenth century, so much of the grave romance and picturesque decorum of our past manners. Henry Sydney was very sanguine; he was reconciled to the disinheritance of Coningsby by the conviction that it was a providential dispensation to make him a Lord Chancellor.

These faithful friends remained in town with Coningsby until he was established in Paper Buildings, and had become a pupil of a celebrated special pleader. They would have remained longer had not he himself suggested that it was better that they should part. It seemed a terrible catastrophe after all the visions of their boyish days, their college dreams, and their dazzling adventures in the world.

"And this is the end of Coningsby, the brilliant Coningsby, that we all loved, that was to be our leader!" said Buckhurst to Lord Henry as they quitted him. "Well, come what may, life has lost something of its bloom."

"The great thing now," said Lord Henry, "is to keep up the chain of our friendship. We must write to him very often, and contrive to be frequently together. It is dreadful to think that in the ways of life our hearts may become estranged. I never felt more wretched than I do at this moment, and yet I have faith that we shall not lose him."

"Amen!" said Buckhurst; "but I feel my plan about the Austrian service was, after all, the only thing. The continent offers a career. He might have been prime minister: several strangers have been; and as for war, look at Brown and Laudohn, and half a hundred others. I had a much better chance of being a field-marshal than he has of being a Lord Chancellor."

"I feel quite convinced that Coningsby will be Lord Chancellor," said Henry Sidney, gravely.

This change of life for Coningsby was a great social revolution. It was sudden and complete. Within a month after the death of

his grandfather his name had been erased from all his fashionable clubs, his horses and carriages sold, and he had become a student of the Temple. He entirely devoted himself to his new pursuit. His being was completely absorbed in it. There was nothing to haunt his mind; no inexperienced scene or sensation of life to distract his intelligence. One sacred thought alone indeed there remained, shrined in the innermost sanctuary of his heart and consciousness. But it was a tradition, no longer a hope. The moment that he had fairly recovered from the first shock of his grandfather's will—had clearly ascertained the consequences to himself, and had resolved on the course to pursue—he had communicated unreservedly with Oswald Millbank, and had renounced those pretensions to the hand of his sister which it ill became the destitute to prefer.

His letter was answered in person. Millbank met Henry Sydney and Buckhurst at the chambers of Coningsby. Once more they were all four together; but under what different circumstances, and with what different prospects to those which attended their separation at Eton! Alone with Coningsby, Millbank spoke to him things which letters could not convey. He bore to him all the sympathy and devotion of Edith; but they would not conceal from themselves that, at this moment, and in the present state of affairs, all was hopeless. In no way did Coningsby ever permit himself to intimate to Oswald the cause of his disinheritance. He was, of course, silent on it to his other friends; as any communication of the kind must have touched on a subject that was consecrated in his inmost soul.

CHAPTER VI.

The state of political parties in England in the spring of 1841 offered a most remarkable contrast to their condition at the period commemorated in the first chapter of this work. The banners of the Conservative camp at this moment lowered on the Whig forces, as the gathering host of the Norman invader frowned on the coast of Sussex. The Whigs were not yet conquered, but they were doomed; and they themselves knew it. The mistake which was made by the Conservative leaders in not retaining office in 1839—and, whether we consider their conduct in a national and constitutional light, or as a mere question of political tactics and party prudence, it was unquestionably a great mistake—had infused into the corps of Whig authority a kind of galvanic action,

which only the superficial could mistake for vitality. Even to form a basis for their future operations, after the conjuncture of '39, the Whigs were obliged to make a fresh inroad on the revenue, the daily increasing debility of which was now arresting attention and exciting public alarm. It was clear that the catastrophe of the government would be financial.

Under all the circumstances of the case, the conduct of the Whig Cabinet, in their final propositions, cannot be described as deficient either in boldness or prudence. The policy which they recommended was in itself a sagacious and spirited policy; but they erred in supposing that, at the period it was brought forward, any measure promoted by the Whigs could have obtained general favour in the country. The Whigs were known to be feeble; they were looked upon as tricksters. The country knew they were opposed by a very powerful party; and, though there certainly never was any authority for the belief, the country did believe that that powerful party were influenced by great principles—had in their view a definite and national policy—and would secure England, instead of a feeble administration and fluctuating opinions, energy and a creed.

The future effect of the Whig proposition of '41 will not be detrimental to that party, even if in the interval they be appropriated piecemeal, as will probably be the case, by their Conservative successors. But for the moment, and in the plight in which the Whig party found themselves, it was impossible to have devised measures more conducive to their precipitate fall. Great interests were menaced by a weak government. The consequence was inevitable. Tadpole and Taper saw it in a moment. They snuffed the factious air, and felt the coming storm. Notwithstanding the extreme congeniality of these worthies, there was a little latent jealousy between them. Tadpole worshipped Registration: Taper adored a Cry. Tadpole always maintained that it was the winnowing of the electoral lists that could alone gain the day: Taper, on the contrary, faithful to ancient traditions, was ever of opinion that the game must ultimately be won by popular clamour. It always seemed so impossible that the Conservative party could ever be popular; the extreme graciousness and personal popularity of the leaders not being sufficiently apparent to be esteemed an adequate set-off against the inveterate odium that attached to their opinions, that the Tadpole philosophy was the favoured tenet in high places; and Taper had had his knuckles well rapped more than once for manœuvring too actively against the New Poor-law, and for hiring several link-boys to bawl a much-wronged lady's name in the Park when the Court prorogued Parliament.

And now, after all, in 1841, it seemed that Taper was right. There was a great clamour in every quarter, and the clamour was against the Whigs and in favour of Conservative principles. What Canadian timber-merchants meant by Conservative principles, it is not difficult to conjecture; or West India planters. It was tolerably clear on the hustings what squires and farmers, and their followers, meant by Conservative principles. What they mean by Conservative principles now is another question; and whether Conservative principles mean something higher than a perpetuation of fiscal arrangements, some of them very impolitic, none of them very important. But no matter what different bodies of men understood by the cry in which they all joined—the Cry existed. Taper beat Tadpole; and the great Conservative party beat the shattered and exhausted Whigs.

Notwithstanding the abstraction of his legal studies, Coningsby could not be altogether insensible to the political crisis. In the political world of course he never mixed, but the friends of his boyhood were deeply interested in affairs, and they lost no opportunity which he would permit them, of cultivating his society. Their occasional fellowship, a visit now and then to Sidonia, and a call sometimes on Flora, who lived at Richmond, comprised his social relations. His general acquaintance did not desert him, but he was out of sight, and did not wish to be remembered. Mr. Ormsby asked him to dinner, and occasionally mourned over his fate in the bow window of White's; while Lord Eskdale even went to see him in the Temple, was interested in his progress, and said, with an encouraging look, that, when he was called to the bar, all his friends must join and get up the steam. Coningsby had once met Mr. Rigby, who was walking with the Duke of Agincourt, which was probably the reason he could not notice a lawyer. Mr. Rigby cut Coningsby.

Lord Eskdale had obtained from Villebecque very accurate details as to the cause of Coningsby being disinherited. Our hero, if one in such fallen fortunes may still be described as a hero, had mentioned to Lord Eskdale his sorrow that his grandfather had died in anger with him; but Lord Eskdale, without dwelling on the subject, had assured him that he had reason to believe that if Lord Monmouth had lived, affairs would have been different. He had altered the disposition of his property at a moment of great and general irritation and excitement; and had been too indolent, perhaps really too indisposed, which he was unwilling ever to acknowledge, to recur to a calmer and more equitable settlement. Lord Eskdale had been more frank with Sidonia, and had told him all about the refusal to become a candidate for Darlford against Mr. Millbank; the communication of Rigby to Lord

Monmouth, as to the presence of Oswald Millbank at the castle, and the love of Coningsby for his sister; all these details, furnished by Villebecque to Lord Eskdale, had been truly transferred by that nobleman to his co-executor; and Sidonia, when he had sufficiently digested them, had made Lady Wallinger acquainted with the whole history.

The dissolution of the Whig Parliament by the Whigs, the project of which had reached Lord Monmouth a year before, and yet in which nobody believed to the last moment, at length took place. All the world was dispersed in the heart of the season, and our solitary student of the Temple, in his lonely chambers, notwithstanding all his efforts, found his eye rather wander over the pages of Tidd and Chitty as he remembered that the great event to which he had so looked forward was now occurring, and he, after all, was no actor in the mighty drama. It was to have been the epoch of his life; when he was to have found himself in that proud position for which all the studies, and meditations, and higher impulses of his nature, had been preparing him. It was a keen trial of a man. Every one of his friends and old companions were candidates, and with sanguine prospects. Lord Henry was certain for a division of his county; Buckhurst harangued a large agricultural borough in his vicinity; Eustace Lyle and Vere stood in coalition for a Yorkshire town; and Oswald Millbank solicited the suffrages of a very important manufacturing constituency. They sent their addresses to Coningsby. He was deeply interested as he traced in them the influence of his own mind; often recognised the very expressions to which he had habituated them. Amid the confusion of a general election, no unimpassioned critic had time to canvass the language of an address to an isolated constituency; yet an intelligent speculator on the movements of political parties might have detected in these public declarations some intimation of new views, and of a tone of political feeling that has unfortunately been too long absent from the public life of this country.

It was the end of a sultry July day, the last ray of the sun shooting down Pall Mall sweltering with dust; there was a crowd round the doors of the Carlton and the Reform Clubs, and every now and then an express arrived with the agitating bulletin of a fresh defeat or a new triumph. Coningsby was walking up Pall Mall. He was going to dine at the Oxford and Cambridge Club, the only club on whose list he had retained his name, that he might occasionally have the pleasure of meeting an Eton or Cambridge friend without the annoyance of encountering any of his former fashionable acquaintances. He lighted in his walk on Mr. Tadpole and Mr. Taper, both of whom he knew. The latter did not notice him, but Mr. Tadpole, more good natured, bestowed on

him a rough nod, not unmarked by a slight expression of coarse pity.

Coningsby ordered his dinner, and then took up the evening papers, where he learnt the return of Vere and Lyle; and read a speech of Buckhurst denouncing the Venetian Constitution, to the amazement of several thousand persons, apparently not a little terrified by this unknown danger, now first introduced to their notice. Being true Englishmen, they were all against Buckhurst's opponent, who was of the Venetian party, and who ended by calling out Buckhurst for his personalities.

Coningsby had dined, and was reading in the library, when a waiter brought up a third edition of the "Sun," with electioneering bulletins from the manufacturing districts to the very latest hour. Some large letters which expressed the name of Darlford caught his eye. There seemed great excitement in that borough; strange proceedings had happened. The column was headed, "Extraordinary Affair! Withdrawal of the Liberal Candidate! Two Tory Candidates in the field!!!"

His eye glanced over an animated speech of Mr. Millbank, his countenance changed, his heart palpitated. Mr. Millbank had resigned the representation of the town, but not from weakness; his avocations demanded his presence; he had been requested to let his son supply his place, but his son was otherwise provided for; he should always take a deep interest in the town and trade of Darlford; he hoped that the link between the borough and Hellingsley would be ever cherished (loud cheering); he wished in parting from them to take a step which should conciliate all parties, put an end to local heats and factious contentions, and secure the town an able and worthy representative. For these reasons he begged to propose to them a gentleman who bore a name which many of them greatly honoured; for himself, he knew the individual, and it was his firm opinion that whether they considered his talents, his character, or the ancient connexion of his family with the district, he could not propose a candidate more worthy of their confidence than HARRY CONINGSBY, ESQ.

This proposition was received with that wild enthusiasm which occasionally bursts out in the most civilised communities. The contest between Millbank and Rigby was equally balanced, neither party was over-confident. The Conservatives were not particularly zealous in behalf of their champion; there was no Marquess of Monmouth and no Coningsby Castle now to back him; he was fighting on his own resources, and he was a beaten horse. The Liberals did not like the prospect of a defeat, and dreaded the mortification of Rigby's triumph. The Moderate men, who thought more of local than political circumstances, liked the name of

Coningsby. Mr. Millbank had dexterously prepared his leading supporters for the substitution. Some traits of the character and conduct of Coningsby had been cleverly circulated. Thus there was a combination of many favourable causes in his favour. In half an hour's time his image was stamped on the brain of every inhabitant of the borough as an interesting and accomplished youth, who had been wronged, and who deserved to be rewarded. It was whispered that Rigby was his enemy. Magog Wrath and his mob offered Mr. Millbank's committee to throw Mr. Rigby into the river, or to burn down his hotel, in case he was prudent enough not to show. Mr. Rigby determined to fight to the last. All his hopes were now staked on the successful result of this contest. It were impossible if he were returned that his friends could refuse him high office. The whole of Lord Monmouth's reduced legacy was devoted to this end. The third edition of the "Sun" left Mr. Rigby in vain attempting to address an infuriated populace.

Here was a revolution in the fortunes of our forlorn Coningsby! When his grandfather first sent for him to Monmouth House, his destiny was not verging on greater vicissitudes. He rose from his seat, and was surprised that all the silent gentlemen who were about him did not mark his agitation. Not an individual there that he knew. It was now an hour to midnight, and to-morrow the almost unconscious candidate was to go to the poll. In a tumult of suppressed emotion, Coningsby returned to his chambers. He found a letter in his box from Oswald Millbank, who had been twice at the Temple. Oswald had been returned without a contest, and had reached Darlford in time to hear Coningsby nominated. He set off instantly to London, and left at his friend's chambers a rapid narrative of what had happened, with information that he should call on him again on the morrow at nine o'clock, when they were to repair together immediately to Darlford in time for Coningsby to be chaired, for no one entertained a doubt of his triumph.

Coningsby did not sleep a wink that night, and yet when he rose early felt fresh enough for any exploit, however difficult or hazardous. He felt as an Egyptian does when the Nile rises after its elevation had been despaired of. At the very lowest ebb of his fortunes, an event had occurred which seemed to restore all. He dared not contemplate the ultimate result of all these wonderful changes. Enough for him, that when all seemed dark, he was about to be returned to Parliament by the father of Edith, and his vanquished rival who was to bite the dust before him was the author of all his misfortunes. Love, Vengeance, Justice, the glorious pride of having acted rightly, the triumphant sense of complete and absolute success—here were chaotic materials from which

order was at length evolved; and all subsided in an overwhelming feeling of gratitude to that Providence that had so signally protected him.

There was a knock at the door. It was Oswald. They embraced. It seemed that Oswald was as excited as Coningsby. His eye sparkled, his manner was energetic.

"We must talk it all over during our journey. We have not a minute to waste."

During that journey Coningsby learned something of the course of affairs which gradually had brought about so singular a revolution in his favour. We mentioned that Sidonia had acquired a thorough knowledge of the circumstances which had occasioned and attended the disinheritance of Coningsby. These he had told to Lady Wallinger, first by letter, afterwards in more detail on her arrival in London. Lady Wallinger had conferred with her husband. She was not surprised at the goodness of Coningsby, and she sympathised with all his calamities. He had ever been the favourite of her judgment, and her romance had always consisted in blending his destinies with those of her beloved Edith. Sir Joseph was a judicious man, who never cared to commit himself; a little selfish, but good, just, and honourable, with some impulses, only a little afraid of them; but then his wife stepped in like an angel, and gave them the right direction. They were both absolutely impressed with Coningsby's admirable conduct, and Lady Wallinger was determined that her husband should express to others the convictions which he acknowledged in unison with herself. Sir Joseph spoke to Mr. Millbank, who stared—but Sir Joseph spoke feebly. Lady Wallinger conveyed all this intelligence and all her impressions to Oswald and Edith. The younger Millbank talked with his father, who, making no admissions, listened with interest, inveighed against Lord Monmouth, and condemned his will.

After some time, Mr. Millbank made inquiries about Coningsby, took an interest in his career, and, like Lord Eskdale, declared that when he was called to the bar, his friends would have an opportunity to evince their sincerity. Affairs remained in this state, until Oswald thought that circumstances were sufficiently ripe to urge his father on the subject. The position which Oswald had assumed at Millbank had necessarily made him acquainted with the affairs and fortune of his father. When he computed the vast wealth which he knew was at his parent's command, and recalled Coningsby in his humble chambers, toiling after all his noble efforts without any results, and his sister pining in a provincial solitude, Oswald began to curse wealth, and to ask himself what was the use of all their marvellous industry and supernatural skill.

He addressed his father with that irresistible frankness which a strong faith can alone inspire. What are the objects of wealth, if not to bless those who possess our hearts? The only daughter, the friend to whom the only son was indebted for his life—here are two beings surely whom one would care to bless, and both are unhappy. Mr. Millbank listened without prejudice, for he was already convinced. But he felt some interest in the present conduct of Coningsby. A Coningsby working for his bread was a novel incident for him. He wished to be assured of its authenticity. He was resolved to convince himself of the fact. And perhaps he would have gone on yet for a little time, and watched the progress of the experiment, already interested and delighted by what had reached him, had not the dissolution brought affairs to a crisis. The misery of Oswald at the position of Coningsby, the silent sadness of Edith, his own conviction, which assured him that he could do nothing wiser or better than take this young man to his heart, so ordained it that Mr. Millbank, who was after all the creature of impulse, decided suddenly, and decided rightly. Never making a single admission to all the representations of his son, Mr. Millbank in a moment did all that his son could have dared to desire.

This is a very imperfect and crude intimation of what had occurred at Millbank and Hellingsley; yet it conveys a faint sketch of the enchanting intelligence that Oswald conveyed to Coningsby during their rapid travel. When they arrived at Birmingham, they found a messenger and a despatch, informing Coningsby, that at mid-day, at Darlford, he was at the head of the poll by an overwhelming majority, and that Mr. Rigby had resigned. He was, however, requested to remain at Birmingham, as they did not wish him to enter Darlford, except to be chaired, so he was to arrive there in the morning. At Birmingham, therefore, they remained.

There was Oswald's election to talk of as well as Coningsby's. They had hardly had time for this. Now they were both Members of Parliament. Men must have been at school together, to enjoy the real fun of meeting thus, and realising boyish dreams. Often, years ago, they had talked of these things, and assumed these results; but those were words and dreams—these were positive facts; after some doubts and struggles, in the freshness of their youth, Oswald Millbank and Harry Coningsby were Members of the British Parliament; public characters, responsible agents, with a career.

This afternoon, at Birmingham, was as happy an afternoon as usually falls to the lot of man. Both of these companions were labouring under that degree of excitement which is necessary to

felicity. They had enough to talk about. Edith was no longer a forbidden or a sorrowful subject. There was rapture in their again meeting under such circumstances. Then there were their friends; that dear Buckhurst, who had just been called out for styling his opponent a Venetian, and all their companions of early days. What a sudden and marvellous change in all their destinies! Life was a pantomime; the wand was waved, and it seemed that the schoolfellows had of a sudden become elements of power, springs of the great machine.

A train arrived; restless they sallied forth, to seek diversion in the dispersion of the passengers. Coningsby and Millbank, with that glance, a little inquisitive, even impertinent, if we must confess it, with which one greets a stranger when he emerges from a public conveyance, were lounging on the platform. The train arrived; stopped; the doors were thrown open, and from one of them emerged Mr. Rigby! Coningsby, who had dined, was greatly tempted to take off his hat and make him a bow, but he refrained. Their eyes met. Rigby was dead beat. He was evidently used up; a man without a resource; the sight of Coningsby his last blow; he had met his fate.

"My dear fellow," said Coningsby, "I remember I wanted you to dine with my grandfather at Montem, and that fellow would not ask you. Such is life!"

About eleven o'clock the next morning they arrived at the Darlford station. Here they were met by an anxious deputation, who received Coningsby as if he were a prophet, and ushered him into a car covered with satin and blue ribbons, and drawn by six beautiful grey horses, caparisoned in his colours, and ridden by postilions, whose very whips were blue and white. Triumphant music sounded; banners waved; the multitude were marshalled; the Freemasons, at the first opportunity, fell into the procession; the Odd Fellows joined it at the nearest corner. Preceded and followed by thousands, with colours flying, trumpets sounding, and endless huzzas, flags and handkerchiefs waving from every window, and every balcony filled with dames and maidens bedecked with his colours, Coningsby was borne through enthusiastic Darlford like Paulus Emilius returning from Macedon. Uncovered, still in deep mourning, his fine figure, and graceful bearing, and his intelligent brow, at once won every female heart.

The singularity was that all were of the same opinion: everybody cheered him, every house was adorned with his colours. His triumphal return was no party question. Magog Wrath and Bully Bluck walked together like lambs at the head of his procession.

The car stopped before the principal hotel in the High Street.

It was Mr. Millbank's committee. The broad street was so crowded, that, as every one declared, you might have walked on the heads of the people. Every window was full; the very roofs were peopled. The car stopped, and the populace gave three cheers for Mr. Millbank. Their late member, surrounded by his friends, stood in the balcony, which was fitted up with Coningsby's colours, and bore his name on the hangings in gigantic letters formed of dahlias. The flashing and inquiring eye of Coningsby caught the form of Edith, who was leaning on her father's arm.

The hustings were opposite the hotel, and here, after a while, Coningsby was carried, and, stepping from his car, took up his post to address, for the first time, a public assembly. Anxious as the people were to hear him, it was long before their enthusiasm could subside into silence. At length that silence was deep and absolute. He spoke; his powerful and rich tones reached every ear. In five minutes' time every one looked at his neighbour, and without speaking they agreed that there never was anything like this heard in Darlford before.

He addressed them for a considerable time, for he had a great deal to say; not only to express his gratitude for the unprecedented manner in which he had become their representative, and for the spirit in which they had greeted him, but he had to offer them no niggard exposition of the views and opinions of the member whom they had so confidingly chosen, without even a formal declaration of his sentiments.

He did this with so much clearness, and in a manner so pointed and popular, that the deep attention of the multitude never wavered. His lively illustrations kept them often in continued merriment. But when towards his close he drew some picture of what he hoped might be the character of his future and lasting connection with the town, the vast throng was singularly affected. There were a great many present at that moment who, though they had never seen Coningsby before, would willingly have then died for him. Coningsby had touched their hearts, for he had spoken from his own. His spirit had entirely magnetised them. Darlford believed in Coningsby: and a very good creed.

And now Coningsby was conducted to the opposite hotel. He walked through the crowd. The progress was slow, as every one wished to shake hands with him. His friends, however, at last safely landed him. He sprung up the stairs; he was met by Mr. Millbank, who welcomed him with the greatest warmth, and offered his hearty congratulations.

"It is to you, dear sir, that I am indebted for all this," said Coningsby.

"No," said Mr. Millbank; "it is to your own high principles, great talents, and good heart."

After he had been presented by the late member to the principal personages in the borough, Mr. Millbank said—

"I think we must now give Mr. Coningsby a little rest. Come with me," he added, "here is some one who will be very glad to see you."

Speaking thus, he led our hero a little away, and placing his arm in Coningsby's with great affection opened the door of an apartment. There was Edith, radiant with loveliness and beaming with love. Their agitated hearts told at a glance the tumult of their joy. The father joined their hands, and blessed them with words of tenderness.

CHAPTER VII.

The marriage of Coningsby and Edith took place early in the autumn. It was solemnised at Millbank, and they passed their first moon at Hellingsley, which place was in future to be the residence of the member for Darlford. The estate was to devolve to Coningsby after the death of Mr. Millbank, who in the meantime made arrangements which permitted the newly-married couple to reside at the Hall in a manner becoming its occupants. All these settlements, as Mr. Millbank assured Coningsby, were effected not only with the sanction, but at the express instance of his son.

An event, however, occurred not very long after the marriage of Coningsby, which rendered this generous conduct of his father-in-law no longer necessary to his fortunes, though he never forgot its exercise. The gentle and unhappy daughter of Lord Monmouth quitted a scene with which her spirit had never greatly sympathised. Perhaps she might have lingered in life for yet a little while, had it not been for that fatal inheritance which disturbed her peace and embittered her days, haunting her heart with the recollection that she had been the unconscious instrument of injuring the only being whom she loved, and embarrassing and encumbering her with duties foreign to her experience and her nature. The marriage of Coningsby had greatly affected her, and from that day she seemed gradually to decline. She died towards the end of the autumn, and, subject to an ample annuity to Villebecque, she bequeathed the whole of her fortune to the husband of Edith. Gratifying as it was to him to present such an inheritance

to his wife, it was not without a pang that he received the intelligence of the death of Flora. Edith sympathised in his affectionate feelings, and they raised a monument to her memory in the gardens of Hellingsley.

Coningsby passed his next Christmas in his own hall, with his beautiful and gifted wife by his side, and surrounded by the friends of his heart and his youth.

They stand now on the threshold of public life. They are in the leash, but in a moment they will be slipped. What will be their fate? Will they maintain in august assemblies and high places the great truths which in study and in solitude they have embraced? Or will their courage exhaust itself in the struggle—their enthusiasm evaporate before hollow-hearted ridicule—their generous impulses yield with a vulgar catastrophe to the tawdry temptations of a low ambition? Will their skilled intelligence subside into being the adroit tool of a corrupt party? Will Vanity confound their fortunes, or Jealousy wither their sympathies? Or will they remain brave, single, and true—refuse to bow before shadows and worship phrases—sensible of the greatness of their position, recognise the greatness of their duties—denounce to a perplexed and disheartened world the frigid theories of a generalising age that have destroyed the individuality of man, and restore the happiness of their country by believing in their own energies, and daring to be great?

THE END.

LONDON:
SAVILL, EDWARDS AND CO., PRINTERS, CHANDOS STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.

00071606

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 26 June, 2018